UNITED STATES ARMY

Spiritual Fitness Guide

“Purpose Leads, Strength Follows”

“When our Soldiers are grounded in spiritual health, driven by purpose, and connected to one another, they will excel in life and prevail in war.”

LTG Kevin D. Admiral
Commander, III Armored Corps

U.S. ARMY

PRO DEO ET PATRIA

2025

Soldiers and Leaders of the Army,

It remains a great privilege to serve alongside you in our esteemed Army. I'm pleased to commemorate a historic milestone, the release of the Army Spiritual Fitness Guide. This guide symbolizes 250 years of the Chaplain Corps standing shoulder to shoulder with you in formations, reaching wherever our Soldiers and Families are to strengthen the heart, spirit, and soul that defends the greatest nation on Earth. These pages are not just a culmination of shared experience; they highlight the remarkable operational effectiveness of spiritual strength.

Our Army leaders, especially in teams and squads, must be equipped to lead Soldiers to success in war and life. This guide serves as an operational application of doctrine, giving field-tested definition to the spiritual domain while clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each Soldier.

Spiritual readiness must be leader-driven at every echelon.

I encourage each of you to get after the spiritual work beneath the surface of your lives, using the guide as a standard for personal growth and spiritual fitness within your units. Let's continue building each new generation into a community that fights and wins together through strength of *Identity, Purpose, and Meaning.* Future large-scale multidomain operations may present uncertainties, but one unwavering and clear assurance I offer is that the Chaplain Corps, as a pillar of spiritual and religious support, will be there with you.

Pro Deo et Patria!

William (Bill) Green, Jr.
U.S. Army Chaplain Corps
Major General, Chief of Chaplains

Soldiers and Leaders of the Army,

I am proud to introduce this spiritual fitness guide. In our challenging world, spiritual fitness is essential for resilience, adaptability, and mission readiness. This guide provides Soldiers with many spiritual resources necessary to thrive in demanding environments and navigate life's complexities with resolve. Most importantly, it equips leaders.

Purpose Leads, Strength Follows.

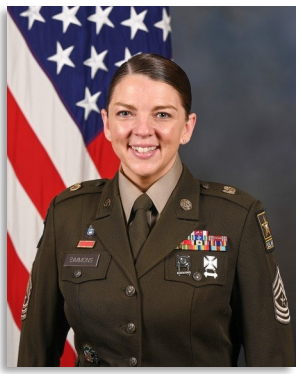
This spiritual fitness motto embodies our Army's commitment to building a strong foundation of spiritually healthy, purpose-driven Soldiers and Families. When Soldiers derive purpose from their source of inner strength and collective mission, they become unstoppable in war.

Use this tool to enhance your understanding of spiritual fitness; it is crucial to well-being and operational effectiveness. This guide offers perspective into strengthening the spirit through field-validated lessons learned that prepare formations for war and life.

We proudly support every Soldier's spiritual readiness, which is true to our constitutional values and Army regulations, regardless of their personal beliefs. This guide promotes a holistic approach to Soldier fitness. I encourage you to engage with these pages actively, using the many multimedia resources to cultivate spiritual fitness for yourself and your fellow Soldiers. Let's work together to build a community of accountability that values spiritual well-being and empowers resilient leaders in our Army.

Pro Deo et Patria!

Meaghan B. Simmons
U.S. Army Chaplain Corps
Regimental Sergeant Major



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Additional Resources in this Guide

This interactive guide is full of links to help users navigate and understand broad concepts in spiritual fitness, as well as deep dive into topics that stir more interest. Look for QR codes that provide the following:

Scan magnifying glass QR codes to learn more about a particular topic.

Scholar QR codes will take you to scholarly articles to deep dive into the related topic.

YouTube QR codes contain a video on the topic.

**This guide references third party sources and websites which are NOT officially endorsed by the U.S. Army, but are relevant and widely-respected.*

1

Introduction

Introduction

In an increasingly complex world, the significance of a Soldier's ability to sustain the rigors of large scale combat operations in a multidomain environment is paramount. Beyond the airframes, tanks, weapons, and equipment, the driving force behind every fight begins inside each Soldier - in their spirit. Army leaders cannot afford to fail in creating spiritually fit formations. *Spiritual Fitness is the conditioning of a Soldier's spirit towards readiness—to fight and win in war and life.*

This guide aims to enhance the Army's understanding of spiritual fitness as a vital component of overall well-being and operational sustainment. It offers insights into key concepts that nurture the spirit and foster a sense of purpose among Army personnel. Moreover, this guide emphasizes the critical role of leaders in promoting spiritual fitness and training within their units. It details the proactive measures Soldiers and leaders can take to support their formations and win the next fight.

A Soldier meditating to prepare his spirit for a 15-mile ruck march at the FORSCOM Best Squad Competition. *Photo by SPC Kollyn Omarah*

Purpose

This guide assists both Soldiers and leaders in ensuring spiritual fitness and readiness as individuals and units by cultivating Soldiers and formations that possess the *will to fight and win in war and life*.

"The Soldier's heart, the Soldier's spirit, the Soldier's soul, are everything. Unless the Soldier's soul sustains him he cannot be relied on and will fail himself and his commander and his country in the end."

- GEN George C. Marshall

Constitutional Foundation

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly, and the right to petition. This framework protects both religious and non-religious beliefs, ensuring that all individuals have the right to pursue their understanding of spiritual health.

Regulatory Support

Derived from the freedom protected in the First Amendment, the Army echoes support for spiritual readiness in Army Regulations (AR) 600-20, and 165-1, as well as Field Manual (FM) 7-22, among other doctrine. These documents collectively underscore the Army's commitment to fostering a holistic environment where the total health of the force is prioritized, regardless of religious beliefs.

AR 600-20 Army Command Policy

AR 600-20 emphasizes the importance of equal oppor-

A Soldier firing the M240B machine gun, training his will to fight.

Photo by PFC Luis Garcia

tunity and the safeguarding of individual constitutional rights within the Army. It advocates for a command climate that promotes respect, dignity, and emotional well-being for all Soldiers. By recognizing spiritual fitness as an integral component of total Soldier fitness, AR 600-20 supports religious and non-religious spiritual practices.

AR 165-1 Army Chaplain Corps Activities

AR 165-1 establishes Religious Affairs Specialists as the Army's only enlisted occupation that specializes in spiritual readiness as a core capability: Strengthening Spiritual Readiness. It also identifies the enlisted unit ministry team members as spiritual fitness trainers in the Holistic Health & Fitness program (H2F). Through these capabilities, these enlisted specialists provide essential training, coaching, and development to enhance the spiritual fitness of Soldiers and units.

Religious Affairs Specialists and Chaplains lead spiritual fitness training (Chapter 7), which is aligned with the concepts presented throughout this guide. The training outlines practical approaches to spiritual development and readiness to equip unit leaders and Soldiers.

As part of the Unit Ministry Team (UMT) Religious Affairs Specialists serve with Chaplains in every battalion in the Army. Their broad unit experience even extends to serving as First Sergeant for the most senior organizations in the military. 56Ms lead 3,400 Soldiers in the White House, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pentagon, and 81 other organizations. Their unique, broad career opportunities in every echelon above company help them to understand the Army and provide Spiritual Fitness training and support to every Soldier.

FM 7-22 HOLISTIC HEALTH AND FITNESS

Chapter 10 of FM 7-22 discusses spiritual readiness, emphasizing the development of personal qualities needed to endure stress, hardship, and tragedy. It highlights the importance of spiritual readiness for all personnel, regardless of religious beliefs, and the role of leaders in fostering a climate that respects diverse spiritual practices.

Spiritual Readiness is the goal for every Solider—Spiritual Fitness is the process of reaching the goal.

Purpose Leads, Strength Follows

In Army operations, it is essential to begin with the end state in mind—*the conditions and circumstances that define victory*. In spiritual fitness, having a clear vision of the future is crucial for fostering motivation, purpose, effort, and encouragement. This principle is encapsulated in the spiritual fitness motto: *Purpose Leads, Strength Follows*.

A Soldier may possess strength without purpose, but such strength pales compared to that of a Soldier guided by purpose, who then develops strength to achieve spiritual readiness for combat.

For example, consider a Soldier instructed to walk all day through a forest while carrying heavy gear—without affording them a purpose. Step-by-step the Soldier's will to continue would decrease to a level that they might give up entirely; without an understanding of 'why'. A lack of purpose can demoralize the strongest of Soldiers. Similarly, Soldiers need a meaningful "why" to grow spiritually and to maintain their will to win. This purpose can be drawn from various sources, but is well captured best in the Army's motto:

Be All You Can Be

The timeless motto, Be All You Can Be, resonates deeply within every Soldier. It inspires those entering the Army to realize their potential and reminds veterans to continually

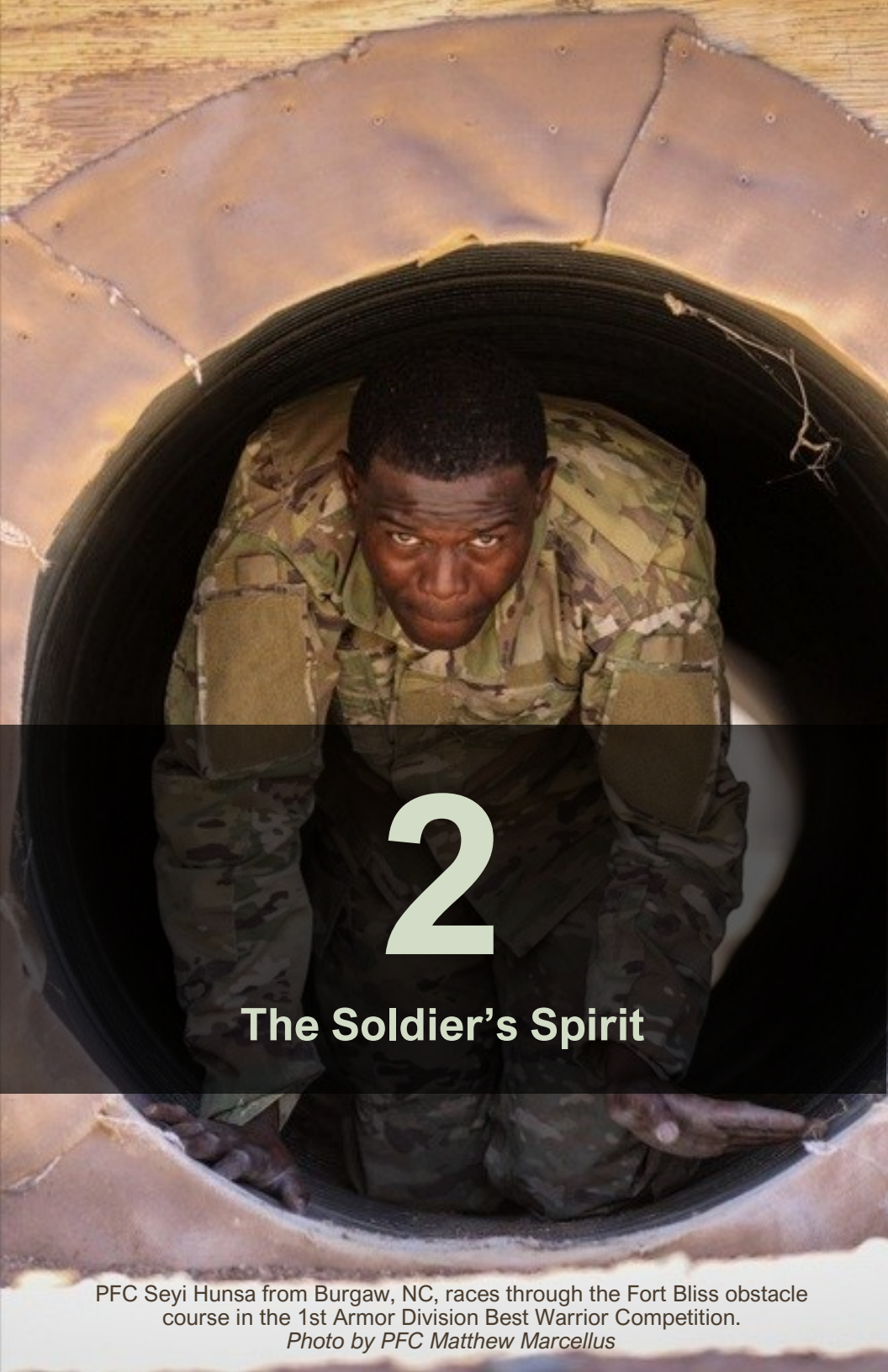
strive to be their best. Spiritual fitness is embodied in the motto's beginning and ending word: BE.

To "be" is *to exist*. Spiritual fitness delves into what lies beneath the surface of a Soldier's life—the intrinsic drive that fuels the will to fight and succeed in both war and life. Before a Soldier can achieve, they must "be," and this spiritual fitness guide aids Soldiers and leaders in understanding this existence and how it helps Soldiers to align within their team, squad, section, and the Army.

Purpose Leads, Strength Follows!

Key Concepts from Chapter One

- Spiritual Fitness is essential for healthy Soldiers and the will to fight.
- Leadership is vital for promoting spiritual fitness in units.
- Regulations support spiritual fitness and respect diverse beliefs.
- Religious Affairs Specialists and Chaplains train Soldiers and Units to be spiritually ready through Spiritual Fitness Training.



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The Soldier's Spirit

PFC Seyi Hunsa from Burgaw, NC, races through the Fort Bliss obstacle course in the 1st Armor Division Best Warrior Competition.
Photo by PFC Matthew Marcellus

Components of the Soldier's Spirit

In today's multidomain environment, Soldiers are influenced by a myriad of external factors, including societal expectations, technological advancements, diverse cultural interactions, and an ever-changing battlespace. These influences shape the behaviors Soldiers exhibit, ranging from resilience and adaptability to stress and harmful actions.

The Soldier's spirit, existing between stimulus and response, is much like a compass, providing substance to the direction that they take in life and the decisions they make.

The Soldier's Spirit lies at the intersection of external influences (stimulus) and applied behavior (response). It is the vital junction that supports the weight of life and drives Soldier action. In a relatable way, the Soldier's spirit is much like a compass in life, providing substance to the direction that they take in life and the decisions they make. This reality makes understanding and developing the Soldier's spirit crucial, as the direction of a Soldier ultimately shapes the direction and well-being of the Army.

The Source of Strength

If the Soldier's spirit serves as the substance in a compass, then the Source of Strength is like a guiding compass

needle. *A source of strength is the internal, driving purpose that empowers each Soldier, anchoring them amidst the challenges of life*. This source is chosen by each Soldier as the centerpiece of their life's direction. Soldiers choose a source based on their personal values, beliefs, experiences, and cultural backgrounds.

The Soldier's Source of Strength is the foundation of their will to fight challenges in life.

A consistent theme among Soldiers is that their source of strength encompasses the motivations that inspire them and inform the principles they hold dear.

Admiral Jeremiah Denton was captured during the Vietnam War and held as a prisoner of war for nearly eight years. In his memoir, "When Hell Was in Session," Denton recounts the harsh conditions and psychological torment he faced in captivity. Despite these immense challenges, he and his fellow POWs found ways to uplift each other. They organized secret gatherings, shared stories, and even communicated through coded taps on the walls to maintain a sense of normalcy and connection.

One poignant example involved Denton and other POWs staging improvised performances to bring laughter and joy during otherwise grim days. These moments of lightheartedness provided vital spiritual restoration despite the harsh realities of their confinement, allowing them to maintain their dignity and hope. Denton's resolve and ability to inspire joy among his comrades played a crucial role in their survival, until their eventual release.

What Sources of Strength can you identify?

From an operational perspective, the Soldier's source of strength fuels their purpose and will to fight. For some, the centerpiece may be God, family, community, or patriotism; for others, it may stem from a desire for personal growth, integrity, or the bonds formed with fellow Soldiers in shared experiences.

> "Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."
>
>
>
> -Victor Frankl
> Holocaust survivor

Regardless of the chosen source, recognizing this internal source is vital, as it instills resilience, determination, and accountability to allow Soldiers to navigate adversity with confidence. Ultimately, a well-defined source of strength enhances a Soldier's sense of identity and commitment to the Army.

The Substance of the Compass: the Soldier's Spirit

The *Soldier's Spirit embodies their non-physical identity and the essence through which their life is experienced*. The spirit consists of three primary components: **consciousness**, **creativity**, and **connection**. These elements form the core of a Soldier's character, presences, and intellect—guided by the source of strength (like a compass needle).

Like the substance of a compass, the Soldier's spirit provides critical input to a Soldier's direction, values, and decisions in life.

The Soldier's Spirit influences behavior and worldviews, determining resilience and commitment when dealing with external influences and making decisions.

Consciousness

Consciousness refers *to the state of being aware of and able to evaluate one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings*. It encapsulates the ability to understand oneself and one's place in the world.

Within the context of the Soldier's spirit, consciousness is shaped by several critical sub-components, including **purpose, beliefs, identity, intuition,** and **science**. Each of these elements plays a distinct role in guiding Soldiers in their decision-making processes, shaping their beliefs and actions, and fostering a strong sense of identity and commitment.

Purpose

Purpose is *a fundamental element of consciousness that provides Soldiers with direction and motivation in both their personal and professional l*ives. The need for a purpose stems from likely the most ancient of questions: "Why?" It is a question that every human can relate to, and it emerges in the search for understanding the cosmos surrounding us. This query permeates society, philosophy, sciences, and especially military operations, which often begin with a clear sense of the purpose for any operation.

A historic tragedy regarding the lack of purpose is the infamous "Charge of the Light Brigade" in 1854. A band of British cavalry charged into the jaws of cannon fire. The poem that recounts this tragic moment captures the gravity of their situation:

“There’s not to make reply, there’s not to reason why, there’s but to do and die. Into the valley of death rode the six hundred.”

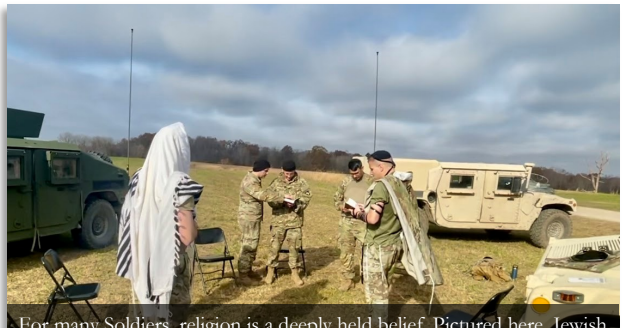
-Alfred Lord Tennyson

Unfortunately, the charge resulted from confusion in orders and a lack of clear purpose, leading to devastating losses and highlighting the catastrophic consequences of leaving the “why,” unanswered.

For Soldiers, finding purpose in their role enhances their commitment to the mission and strengthens their resolve during difficult times. By recognizing how their individual contributions fit into a larger narrative, Soldiers are better equipped to cope with the challenges of life. Ultimately, a strong sense of purpose empowers Soldiers to act with intention, enhancing their overall effectiveness and reinforcing their identity and will.

Beliefs

Beliefs represent *a profound substance of consciousness that shape the perceptions and actions of Soldiers. They are not merely ideas; they embody ideals—deeply held principles that inform how individuals navigate their life*. While beliefs are often influenced by external stimuli such as cultural norms, societal expectations, and shared experiences, they can also exist independently of logic or systematic reasoning. This duality highlights the complexity of



For many Soldiers, religion is a deeply held belief. Pictured here, Jewish Soldiers prepare for a service in Fort Campbell, KY during training.

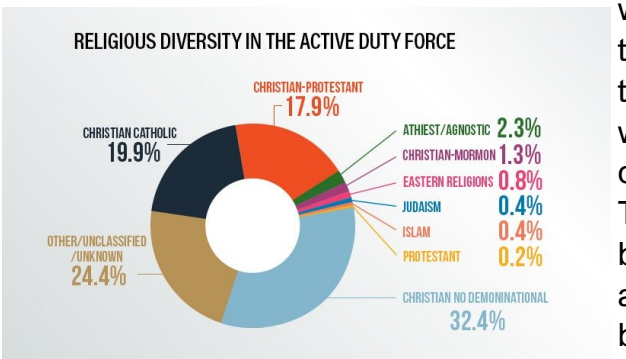
beliefs, as they can be deeply emotional and personal even when lacking a rational basis.

In *House to House: An Epic Memoir of War*, Army veteran David Bellavia shares his gripping experiences during the Second Battle of Fallujah in 2004. Facing intense urban combat against well-entrenched insurgents, Bellavia describes the overwhelming fear, chaos, and moral dilemmas that surrounded him and his fellow Soldiers. Amid such adversity, their beliefs in duty, honor, and their commitment to each other became crucial sources of strength.

In one harrowing instance, Bellavia chose to face enemy fire to save his trapped comrades, exemplifying how deep-rooted beliefs in solidarity and mission can push Soldiers to act with incredible bravery. His narrative illustrates that it is often these bonds formed through shared beliefs that sustain Soldiers' spirits in the face of overwhelming odds.

What beliefs did you identify?

The intrinsic value of beliefs lies in their ability to provide Soldiers with a sense of understanding. A strong belief system can foster resilience, guiding Soldiers through challenging situations and reinforcing their commitment to their mission. For instance, beliefs in concepts such as duty, honor, and sacrifice can instill a sense of pride and belonging within a unit, motivating Soldiers to face adversity with unwavering determination. These shared beliefs can create a powerful bond among comrades, reinforcing a collec-



One form of beliefs are deeply help religious systems.
source: https://firstliberty.org/news/how-religious-is-our-military/

tive identity that enhances unit cohesion.

However, the very nature of beliefs can also introduce caution. When beliefs are formed without logical examination or are rigidly adhered to, they may lead to dogmatism or bias, preventing Soldiers from adapting to new situations or considering alternative perspectives. This inflexibility can hinder critical thinking, potentially resulting in poor decision-making in high-stakes scenarios. Moreover, external influences can also lead to the adoption of beliefs that may not align with the core values of the Army or the principles of ethical conduct.

Consequently, Soldiers must cultivate an awareness of their beliefs, embracing those that genuinely resonate with their convictions, while remaining open to reevaluation in light of new information and experiences. By balancing conviction with rational inquiry and spiritual guidance, Soldiers can harness the strength of their beliefs while mitigating the risks associated with blind adherence, ultimately strengthening the core of their spirit.

Identity

While purpose is concerned with the question "why," identity focuses on the question "who?" Where purpose seeks reason, identity *involves a person's understanding of who they are at their core and how they wish to be perceived by others*.

This dual quest encompasses an internal explora-

Developing identity inside is like looking at mirror to see ourselves accurately, and orienting towards what we want to be. Pictured here, Staff Sgt. Reyes Marquez looks into a mirror as he prepares for a boxing match in the World Class Athlete Program.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew Porch

tion of self and a vision for the future.

The Army aims to assist Soldiers in developing their identity by orienting them toward the Army Values, Warrior Ethos, creeds, and timeless oaths—starting from the very first days of basic combat training.

From the moment Soldiers enter basic training, the Army actively seeks to cultivate a shared sense of identity among its recruits. This begins with uniformity; every Soldier is issued the same uniform and required to maintain a standardized haircut, symbolizing a collective commitment to a unified fighting force—greater than one person, but mace strong by each person's commitment to the team.

This Army shaping not only strengthens the bond among Soldiers but also fosters a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. By emphasizing a shared identity, the Army lays the foundation for teamwork, discipline, and camaraderie—essential elements that will support Soldiers throughout their military career.

Identity, however, is not static; it evolves over time, shaped by new experiences and insights. Soldiers face the challenge of con-

Quick Questions to Explore Identity

Who am I beyond my role as a Soldier?
What personal traits define me outside of my military service?

What core values are most important to me, and how do they influence my actions?
How do these values align with the Army Values and the Warrior Ethos?

What experiences have shaped my identity the most?
Are there specific events in my life that have significantly influenced who I am today?

Who is someone that is most like the person I aspire to be?
What traits about them do I admire and how can I grow in those areas?

What identity do I want to project to others?
How do I want my peers, leaders, and family to perceive me, both as a Soldier and as an individual?

tinuously reconciling their self-perception with evolving roles in life that will challenge who they are. By embracing this dynamic process of lifelong identity formation, Soldiers can maintain their authenticity while at the same time ensuring they are aligned with their role in the Army.

Intuition

Intuition is *a profound sense of direction that arises from both cognitive abilities and spiritual attunement, enabling Soldiers to subconsciously collect and process information in their environment*. This instinctive understanding allows them to make quick decisions, often under pressure, by synthesizing past experiences, training, and situational cues without the need for deliberate analysis.

While cognitive aspects of intuition draw on learned knowledge and situational awareness, the spiritual dimension fosters a deeper connection to oneself and surroundings, enhancing the ability to understand circumstances holistically. For Soldiers, honing their intuition can be a valuable asset, guiding them through the complexities of combat and ensuring optimal decision-making when every second counts.

Science

The scientific aspect of a Soldier's consciousness encompasses *the psychological characteristics, profiles, and dispositions that define their behavior and performance*. Utilizing data from various psychological assessments—such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and CORE Recon, Soldiers can gain valuable insights into individual strengths, weaknesses, and cognitive styles.

These assessments, while not endorsed by the Army,

enable better alignment of Soldiers' roles within teams, enhancing interpersonal dynamics and fostering effective communication. Furthermore, ongoing research into resilience, stress management, and leadership style contributes to the development of targeted training programs and support systems tailored to the unique needs of Soldiers.

While this guide highlights the importance of scientific insights in understanding a Soldier's consciousness, it deliberately does not delve deeply into these areas. Soldiers are encouraged to reach out to mental readiness H2F specialists for more comprehensive information and support in exploring their psychological profiles and optimizing their cognitive performance.

Here are more resources to help explore the scientific aspect of consciousness:

Military OneSource **Website**: Military OneSource
Phone Number: 1-800-342-9647
Offers confidential support services, including behavioral health resources, and access to professional counselors and experts.

Army Health Promotion **Website**: Army Health Promotion
Provides information on health and wellness programs, including fitness, nutrition, and mental health resources.

VA Mental Health Services **Website**: VA Mental Health
Phone Number: 1-800-273-8255 (Veterans Crisis Line)
Provides mental health resources and support services for veterans, including psychological assessments and treatments.

Meaning

Where Identity explores "who," and purpose explores "why," meaning deals with value: "is it worth it?" A source of strength, mentor, leader, or life coach all serve to help Soldiers find meaning in the challenges of life. After fighting in the Meuse-Argon offensive, GEN MacArthur assessed value (meaning) to 2,500 losses by committing to be a better leader everyday. It gave the tragedy meaning, for him.

Creativity

Creativity is another major component of the human spirit and can be defined as *the ability to generate novel ideas, approaches, and solutions that reflect individual expression and innovative thinking.*

Creativity involves tapping into one's imagination, experiences, and unique spiritual framework to develop strategies to tackle complex tasks, improve efficiency, and enrich the human experience. By fostering creativity, individuals can adapt to challenges and enjoy life.

To fully understand creativity as a vital component of the human spirit, it is essential to explore its primary sub-components: **innovation**, **imagination**, **ethics**, **playfulness**, and **art**. Together, these sub-components form a comprehensive framework for understanding and harnessing creativity in both personal and professional contexts.

Innovation

Innovation is *the process of transforming unique ideas into practical solutions that effectively address challenges or enhance outcomes*. In the context of military operations, innovation allows Soldiers to navigate complex and unpredictable environments to foster a novel approach. It requires a keen eye for identifying opportunities for improvement and the courage to embrace change within existing systems.

To foster an innovative mindset, it's vital for leaders to create an environment that encourages open dialogue and

supports experimentation. This culture empowers Soldiers to share their unique perspectives and leverage their diverse experiences, driving collaborative problem-solving within teams. Innovation thrives when individuals feel safe to explore new ideas and challenge conventional practices.

PFC Rayon Thomas is innovating as she gathers critical information on blood samples collected from above and below an applied tourniquet. Her analysis will play a vital role in evaluating the effectiveness of various devices and understanding the impacts of treatment upon their removal. *Photo by Sgt. Aaron Ellerman.*

Moreover, innovation strengthens a Soldier's sense of agency and ownership. When Soldiers actively engage in developing and refining operations, they contribute to their unit's effectiveness and feel more connected to the mission at hand. By embracing innovation as a core element of creativity, Soldiers cultivate a mindset of continuous improvement.

Imagination

Imagination is *a core element of creativity, serving as a limitless system where ideas are born and possibilities are explored*. It enables individuals to envision scenarios beyond their current reality, allowing them to think beyond conventional

constraints and feed innovation. In the military environment, where adaptability and foresight are crucial, imagination empowers Soldiers to anticipate potential outcomes and devise strategies that may not be immediately apparent.

An Army plan is initially an idea that has yet to meet resistance. To achieve mission success, Soldiers must be empowered to harness their imagination beyond the plan to solve the evolving challenges of the modern battlefield.

Harnessing imagination involves tapping into curiosity and wonder, fostering an openness to new ideas and perspectives. By guiding Soldiers to engage their imaginations, leaders can unlock a wealth of creative potential that can transform routine operations into opportunities for growth. This imaginative thinking encourages the exploration of uncharted territories, inspiring collaboration among team members and leading to breakthrough solutions.

A historic example of imagination is Napoleon's strategic approach in the Battle of Austerlitz. Facing an outnumbered and disadvantaged position, Napoleon devised a seemingly risky plan. He intentionally weakened the right flank of his forces, deceiving the enemy to push forward and thin their advance. Once the enemy seized the opportunity, Napoleon quickly launched a counterattack, trapping the enemy on a frozen lake. The clever leader then destroyed the ice that the enemy stood on with cannon fire, defeating them to win the battle.

Ethics

Ethics, as a component of creativity, refers to the application of moral principles that guide Soldiers in their decision-making processes. This task is inherently individual, though it can be influenced by organizational standards.

Moral & Ethical Spectrum	Examples	
Morally Right	Living Army Values	Professional Conduct
Ethical	Upholding standards, even when many Soldiers do not	
Unethical	Intentionally manipulating data so that the unit looks better in an inspection	Unprofessional Conduct
Morally Wrong	War crimes	

A model depicting the Moral & Ethical spectrum and how it relates to Soldiers through basic examples. Solders should always operate professionally.

Creativity drives ethics because it requires applying moral principles to situations that many people see differently. With many diverse perspectives on morality, the space between "right and wrong," becomes ever-complex. To navigate the complex space between moral and immoral decisions, *known as ethics*, Soldier's must take care to evaluate the outcome of their choices and ensure those outcomes align with the Army Values and the greater good.

Playfulness

Playfulness, as a component of creativity, *embodies the spirit of exploration and joy in overcoming challenges*. In a military context, playfulness is essential for Soldiers, as it allows them to engage in training and problem-solving in a way that feels less rigid and more dynamic. It also gives them a space to relax and enjoy life. When Soldiers embrace playfulness, they not only enhance their creativity but also solidify their understanding of life through positive experiences.

For example, Soldiers training in a simulated virtual

weapons range benefit from a playful environment where they can experiment and learn with less risk. Engaging in these interactive scenarios fosters a sense of enjoyment that taps into different cognitive spaces, encouraging deeper learning and retention. Research supports this, as the "*Broaden-and-Build"* theory suggests that positive experiences enhance cognitive flexibility and creativity, enabling individuals to think outside the box and generate innovative solutions.

Broaden-and-Build found that positive emotions associated with playful training create stronger neural connections, reinforcing the skills being learned. When Soldiers have fun during training, they are more likely to internalize concepts and techniques, enhancing their performance in real-world situations. This approach not only improves individual proficiency but also enriches the Soldier's spirit, making the learning experience memorable and meaningful.

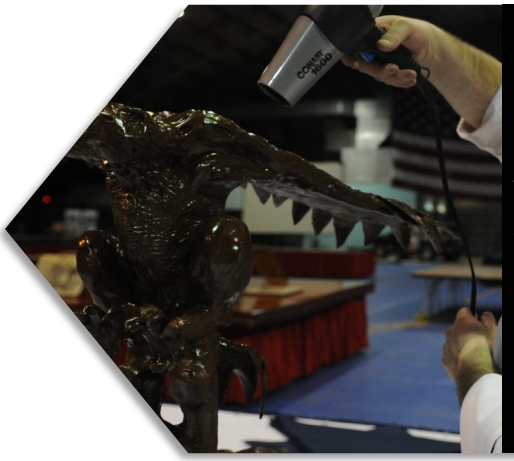
U.S. Army paratroopers assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade training, among other domains, their spiritual fitness through playfulness in 2019. *Photo by Spc. Ryan Lucas*

Furthermore, playfulness promotes collaboration and camaraderie among Soldiers. Sharing enjoyable experiences fosters trust and strengthens bonds within the unit, creating a supportive environment where creativity can thrive.

Art

Art, *as a component of creativity, represents the expression of personal and collective experiences through various mediums, enabling Soldiers to communicate their thoughts, emotions, and insights*. In the military, art takes many forms; from video games to photography, music, writing, and performance—art serves as a powerful outlet for self-expression and reflection.

Engaging in artistic activities allows Soldiers to process the complexities of the human experience, particularly in confronting the challenges of combat. Art provides a therapeutic outlet, helping Soldiers articulate feelings that may be difficult to express verbally. Studies in psychology have shown that artistic engagement can foster emotional healing, reduce stress, and enhance overall well-being.



A culinary artist uses a heat gun to put the final touch on an artistic edible statue. Culinary arts celebrate a tradition rooted in honor, esprit de corps, and teamwork.

Photo by Spc. Daneille Hendrix

Through creative expression, Soldiers are able to turn their experiences—both positive and negative—into tangible forms that offer a unique decompression and finality to the situation. Furthermore, art enhances teamwork and camaraderie within units.

Incorporating art into military training and environments not only enriches the individual Soldier's spirit but also cultivates a culture of creativity within the Army.

Connection

While consciousness and creativity help define a Soldier's identity and purpose, the Soldier's Spirit is only truly complete when it is connected with others. *Connection encompasses both internal attributes and the bridges formed between the Soldier and those around them; it is the critical link from the Soldier to life.*

Through the sub-components of **values**, **mindfulness**, **community**, **accountability**, and **growth**, Soldiers forge powerful bonds that reinforce their spiritual identity and unleash the incredible strength of the Army. These connections empower Soldiers to support one another through challenges, fostering resilience and camaraderie essential for overcoming any obstacle. By nurturing these relationships, Soldiers not only elevate their own well-being but also contribute to a united, effective fighting force.

> "A human being is part of the whole called by us 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feeling as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness."
>
> -Albert Einstein

Values

Values *represent the principles and standards that guide actions and decisions, embodying the importance, worth,*

and usefulness assigned to various aspects of life. They are deeply intertwined with connection to others or a source of strength, often emerging from relationships and shared experiences. A value not shared with others is merely a cognitive belief.

This connection to others through values shapes an understanding of what is meaningful and worthwhile, not only for the individual but also for the team. For example, what makes the Army Values or Warrior Ethos powerful is a Soldier's confidence that their formation agrees to live by the same code. By embracing shared values, Soldiers cultivate a collective commitment that drives their acceptance of high standards and accountability in both personal and professional realms.

An example of high standards through connection are the seven Army Values: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. Each of these values underscores the importance of relationships and interactions with others, reinforcing the idea that values derive meaning from the connections they foster. For instance, Loyalty is inherently about mutual allegiance to the team, while Selfless Service emphasizes putting the needs of others before oneself.

This interdependence demonstrates that every Army Value warrants a connection to someone or something else to be truly meaningful. By grounding their actions in these values, Soldiers not only strengthen their relationships with fellow service members but also cultivate a collective identi-

ty that enhances trust, cohesion, and mission effectiveness.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is *the connection to other people or things through focus, empathy, and understanding to achieve peace of mind*. By cultivating a focused awareness of the present moment, Soldiers can gain insights into their thoughts and emotions, allowing them to understand how internalized experiences shape their perspectives.

Jiu-jitsu exemplifies mindfulness in action, offering valuable lessons that extend beyond the mat. It helps identify self-defeating thoughts and diminishes their power, encouraging a deep understanding of fears while teaching to embrace discomfort.

It highlights the importance of controlled breathing and reminds fighters to recognize when their body is tense so they can relax and perform at their best.

By practicing mindfulness, Soldiers learn to manage stress and emotional responses, which can ultimately lead to more constructive attitudes toward difficult situations. This enhanced emotional regulation not only supports connecting to others but also brings peace to oneself and a team.

Community

Community is a *vital component of a Soldier's spirit within the connection component, serving as the backbone for support, camaraderie, and shared purpose with others*. Within the Army, the bonds formed among Soldiers foster a sense of belonging that transcends individual differences, creating a unified force dedicated to a common mission.

Photo by Samantha Oblander

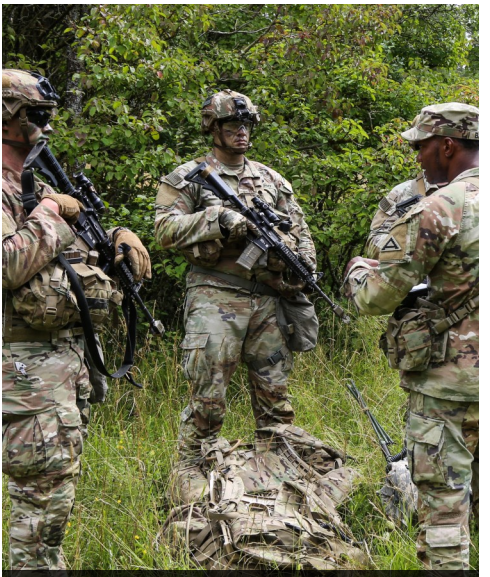
These connections cultivate an environment of trust and mutual respect, where Sol-

diers can rely on one another during times of challenge and uncertainty. Ultimately, community generates the essential currency of success: Trust.

Moreover, community extends beyond the confines of an Army unit to include the surrounding stakeholders and partners around a base or Army depot. These relationships are mutually beneficial; while the military relies on local partnerships, the selfless service rendered to these entities significantly enriches a Soldier's spirit. Engaging with the community not only strengthens the bonds between Soldiers and their neighbors but also fosters a sense of belonging and purpose that deepens the connection to the Army's customers: American citizens.

Accountability

Accountability is *the muscle of Spiritual Fitness, reflecting the communities to which a Soldier shows allegiance and answers to*. Within the Army, these communities of accountability foster trust and reliability, reinforcing the integrity and discipline essential for mission success.



A squad leader conducts final inspections and inventory with his Soldiers prior to competing in the Army Best Squad Competition in Hohenfels, Germany.

Photo by Spc. TaShanna Harris

An accountable Soldier takes responsibility for their actions, acknowledges mistakes, and learns from them to con-

tinually enhance performance. This shared sense of responsibility fortifies the Soldier's spirit by keeping them aligned with their community's shared values and understanding.

In a military context, accountability extends beyond personal conduct; it encompasses responsibility for the well-being and success of the entire unit. Soldiers stand as the watchers of the community's standards and address incongruencies for the health of the entire body. As Soldiers hold themselves and each other accountable, they rely on one another to uphold the Army's Values and confront challenges with collective honor and excellence.

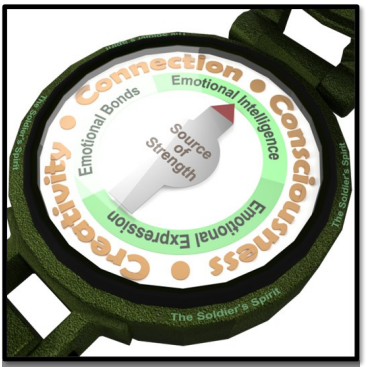
Growth

Growth serves as the final element of connection and is *the tangible evidence that a Soldier's spiritual fitness is effective*. Growth is the pursuit of spiritual fitness to the level that a Soldier is ready for war and life. This growth is forged through crucibles and the relationships Soldiers build with one another. Every interaction, whether during rigorous training exercises or in times of greater adversity, plays a vital role in the progression or regression of a Soldier's spirit.

True growth of spirit occurs when Soldiers embrace challenges as opportunities to rise above, rather than opportunities to retreat. Spiritual growth does not happen without internal tension that drives a desire for change. This reality pushes Sol-

diers to stretch their limits, confront fears, and build spiritual strength.

The Army champions a Soldier's growth journey through programs focused on mentorship, leadership development, and community engagement. These invaluable experiences not only enhance the spirit of each Soldier but also forge a powerful sense of unity within the ranks.



Emotion serves as an inner-ring on the spiritual compass. Emotions overlap each component and intrinsically binds them.

Emotional Expression, Intelligence, and Bonds

With the three major components of the Soldier's spirit framed, it is important to look at the substance present across every internal spiritual component: Emotion. Emotion exists in and around every space within the Soldier's spirit to connect the components and fuel their interaction. As the compass (*pictured left*) shows, there are three ways in which emotion works inside a Soldier to connect spiritual components and shape responses to life:

Emotional Expression

Emotional expression is *the process of conveying feelings through verbal and non-verbal communication, serving as a crucial link between consciousness and creativity*. This interplay allows Soldiers to articulate their internal experiences, enabling them to translate thoughts and feelings into actionable insights. By developing effective emotional expression, Soldiers increase in communication skills and the ability to contribute to Army teams.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is *the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as understand the emotions of others. This capacity serves as the link between consciousness and connection.* High emotional intelligence allows Soldiers to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, fostering empathy and understanding. By developing EQ, Soldiers enhance their communication skills and strengthen relationships, enabling them to better support one another and create a cohesive team capable of effectively addressing challenges.

Emotional Bonds

Emotional bonds are the deep connections formed through shared experiences, characterized by the dynamic nature of relationships that link creativity and connection. These bonds are not static; they evolve through transparency, vulnerability, and mutual support. As Soldiers invest in relationships, they cultivate trust, loyalty, and dependencies on one another. The strength of these emotional bonds ultimately enhances collaboration, allowing Soldiers to face challenges together with resilience and solidarity.

Key Concepts from Chapter Two

- Components of the Soldier's Spirit: The Soldier's spirit comprises three primary components: consciousness, creativity, and connection, which interact with external influences to shape responses to life.
- Source of Strength: This internal driving force empowers each Soldier like a guiding compass needle. It informs values, beliefs, and understanding while providing purpose and motivation.
- Consciousness: This is the awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings, shaped by purpose, beliefs, identity, intuition, and science, which influence decision-making and actions.
- Creativity: This is the ability to generate novel ideas and solutions, encompassing innovation, imagination, ethics, playfulness, and art to help Soldiers adapt to challenges.
- Connection: This vital component emphasizes relationships and fosters bonds through values, mindfulness, community, accountability, and growth, which are crucial for resilience and unit cohesion.

3

Spiritual Fitness Principles

A U.S. Army Sergeant First Class assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division prepares for movement during training in Sodankyla, Finland.

Photo by Photo by Pfc. Gavin Hardy

Spiritual Fitness Principles

Chapter two discussed the core components of the Soldier's spirit: **consciousness**, **creativity**, and **connection**. It explored how these elements interact with emotion to shape decisions and contribute to overall well-being and mission success. This understanding forms the groundwork for development and chapter three: Spiritual Fitness Principles.

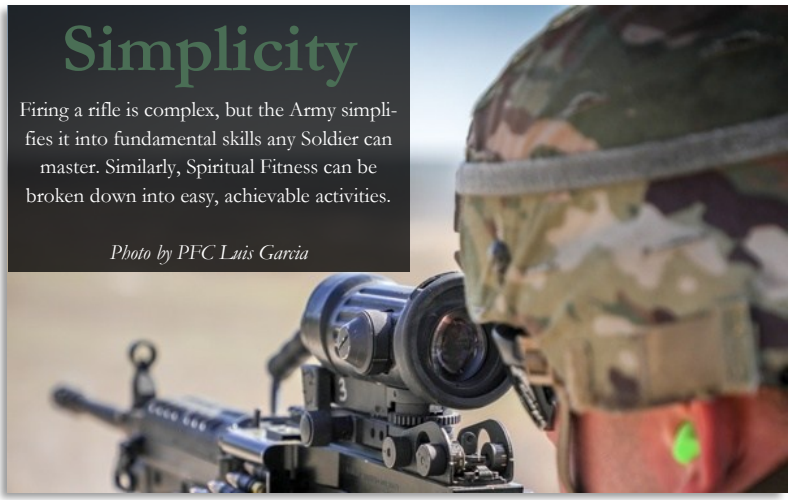
The United States Army uses eight principles to effectively sustain combat power around the world. Similar, effective principles are required to ensure spiritual fitness at individual and unit levels. The principles of **simplicity**, **consistency**, **flexibility**, **sustainability**, **unity of effort**, **responsiveness**, **integration**, and **economy** represent a comprehensive approach to spiritual fitness. Unit Ministry Teams (UMT) play a vital role for commands and individuals in ensuring effective training of these principles, primarily by religious affairs specialists (*see chapter seven*).

Simplicity

Simplicity *in spiritual fitness ensures that practices are uncomplicated and effortlessly integrated into daily routines*. The goal is to make spiritual activities accessible and manageable, avoiding any unnecessary complexity that may alienate or overwhelm individuals. By focusing on straightforward methods and routines, Soldiers can better maintain their spiritual wellness and sustain it over time.

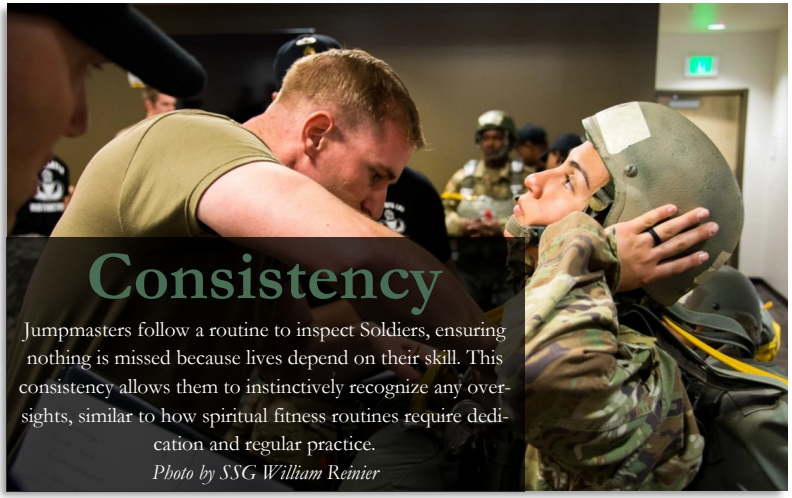
Examples of simplicity include a few minutes of daily meditation or contemplation, focusing on gratitude or mindfulness, or attending a spiritual service. These simple practices can be seamlessly blended into a routine with the goal of providing easily accessible spiritual health and emotional balance.

To develop simplicity, individuals can start by identifying activities that resonate with them, setting small, achievable goals, and gradually building their spiritual routines. Simplifying fosters tangible progress with a lower risk of burnout.


Simplicity
Firing a rifle is complex, but the Army simplifies it into fundamental skills any Soldier can master. Similarly, Spiritual Fitness can be broken down into easy, achievable activities.
Photo by PFC Luis Garcia

Consistency

Consistency in spiritual fitness is about *engaging regularly in intentional practices that nurture spiritual growth*. By establishing steady routines, Soldiers develop a robust spiritual foundation that supports resilience and operational readiness.


Consistency
Jumpmasters follow a routine to inspect Soldiers, ensuring nothing is missed because lives depend on their skill. This consistency allows them to instinctively recognize any oversights, similar to how spiritual fitness routines require dedication and regular practice.
Photo by SSG William Reinier

Examples of consistency include committing to attending weekly gatherings with communities of accountability, daily prayer sessions, monthly spiritual discussion forums, or even bi-weekly walks in a park. These repeated practices build a reliable setting for a Soldier's spiritual health.

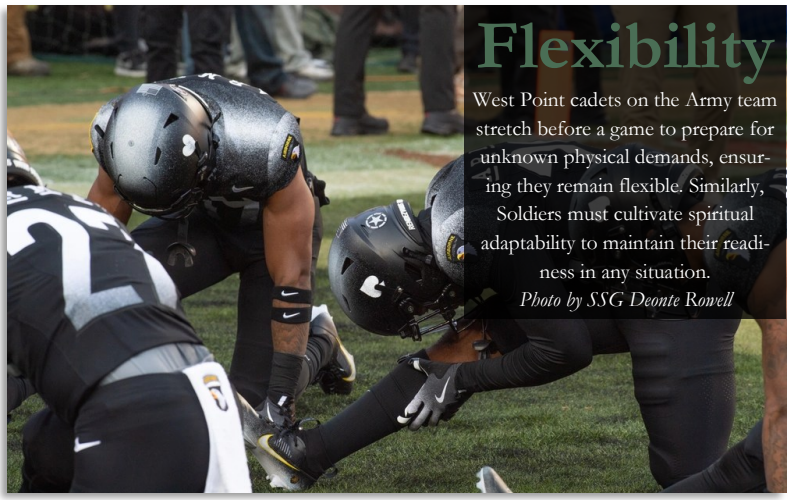
To develop consistency, Soldiers can create a regular schedule for their spiritual activities (*see Spiritual Fitness Planning later in this chapter*), while also integrating these practices with other essential daily commitments. Focusing on consistency establishes spiritual fitness as an indispensable part of daily life and supplies Soldiers with steady spiritual improvement.

Flexibility

Flexibility in spiritual fitness *emphasizes the importance of having diverse spiritual practices that can adapt to various situations*. The Army is a rewarding career, but the nature of military service places Soldiers in austere conditions that can require restrictions on normal events. To thrive, Soldiers must be able to maintain their spiritual fitness regardless of the environment or circumstance.

Examples of flexibility may include engaging in brief moments of reflection, using apps for worship services, or wearing a meaningful pendant. These adaptable practices ensure that Soldiers can connect with their spiritual health, no matter the challenges they face.

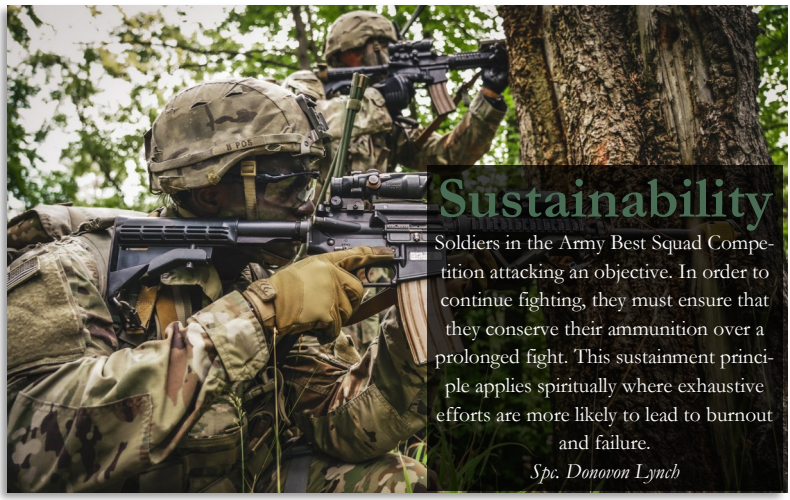
To enhance flexibility, leaders should encourage Soldiers to explore various spiritual practices and identify methods that resonate with them personally. By fostering an environment that supports diverse spiritual expression, Soldiers can develop resilience and strengthen their spiritual fitness journey.


Flexibility
West Point cadets on the Army team stretch before a game to prepare for unknown physical demands, ensuring they remain flexible. Similarly, Soldiers must cultivate spiritual adaptability to maintain their readiness in any situation.
Photo by SSG Deonte Rowell

Sustainability

Sustainability in spiritual fitness *involves viewing spiritual readiness as an enduring investment in Soldier well-being, not a seasonal diet*. It requires a commitment to embedding long-term spiritual growth strategies. Soldiers should have spiritual fitness practices that lead towards their ultimate goals in life.

Examples of sustainability include practices that align with long-term personal growth goals, such as cultivating patience or empathy through ongoing practice and assessment. These goals often take time and persistence, but the payoff is unmatched. Sustainable practices contribute to enduring spiritual fortitude.


Sustainability
Soldiers in the Army Best Squad Competition attacking an objective. In order to continue fighting, they must ensure that they conserve their ammunition over a prolonged fight. This sustainment principle applies spiritually where exhaustive efforts are more likely to lead to burnout and failure.
Spc. Donovon Lynch

To foster sustainability, Soldiers and leaders should treat spiritual readiness as a continuous journey, with structured support systems and ongoing mentorship. This approach ensures spiritual engagement remains consistent and meaningful over time.

Unity of Effort

Unity of Effort in spiritual fitness *highlights the necessity of community and accountability in achieving spiritual goals*. Soldiers benefit from having people who understand their spiritual aspirations and can help keep them on track. This collaborative approach fosters a supportive environment where individuals encourage one another and share the responsibility of maintaining spiritual wellness.

Unity of Effort
The Army family is critically important for every Soldier's spirit. Coming together to create communities of accountability is paramount to Soldier and Army success.
GUESS
US ARMY

Examples of unity of effort include forming small accountability groups where Soldiers discuss their spiritual goals, share experiences, and provide mutual support to the team. These partnerships ensure that each member remains committed and motivated to pursue their growth.

To strengthen unity of effort, units can facilitate opportunities for group engagement, such as team staff rides or spiritual workshops. By creating a culture of collective accountability, Soldiers become more equipped to reach their spiritual goals.

Integration

Integration in spiritual fitness *involves embedding spiritual wellness into a comprehensive framework alongside physical, mental, sleep, and nutritional health*. This holistic approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of all health domains.

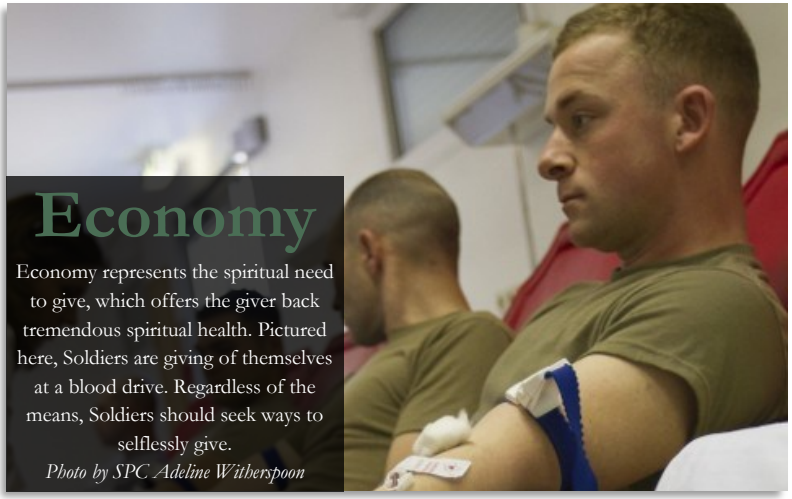
Examples of integration include incorporating spiritual education sessions into holistic health programs that also focus on physical fitness and nutrition, underscoring spiritual fitness as a fundamental foundation for every domain. Another example of this level of integration is listening to spiritually uplifting music while running, or praying quietly before getting some sleep.

To advance integration, Soldiers and leaders should collaborate with various subject matter experts to ensure spiritual aspects are incorporated into broader wellness training initiatives, promoting a balanced approach towards holistic Soldier development.

Integration
Soldiers pictured here take part in a holistic physical fitness event that incorporated an intentional focus on spiritual health. Spiritual Fitness should be well-integrated into every Holistic Health and Fitness domain in order to achieve the maximum benefit of all domains.
Photo by Sgt. Jennifer Shick
ARMY

Economy

Economy in spiritual fitness *emphasizes the importance of a Soldier investing in their spiritual health*. A fundamental truth of humankind is that people invest in what is important to them. Investments further enhance the value of physical fitness, for example, like buying a gym membership. The same truth applies spiritually.

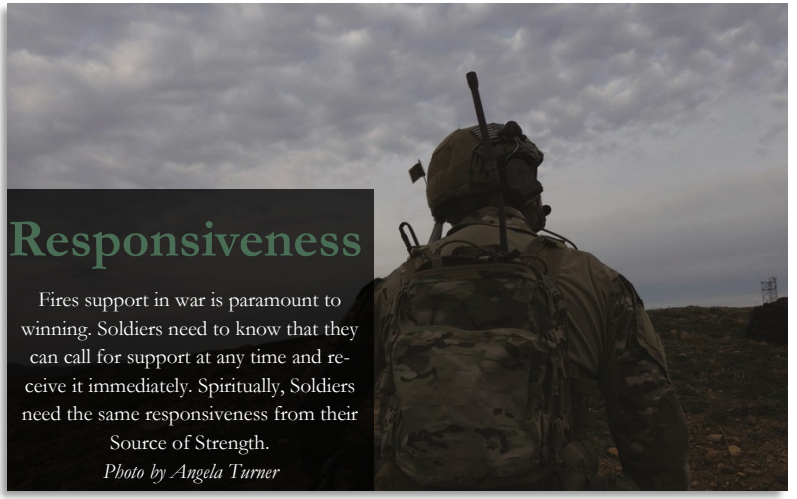

Economy
Economy represents the spiritual need to give, which offers the giver back tremendous spiritual health. Pictured here, Soldiers are giving of themselves at a blood drive. Regardless of the means, Soldiers should seek ways to selflessly give.
Photo by SPC Adeline Witherspoon

Examples of investment may include monetary commitments toward spiritual resources like books or courses, dedicating time to attend workshops or enriching vacations, and putting forth effort to engage in meaningful practices such as prayer, meditation, or community service. Each of these contributions increases the value a Soldier places on their wellness.

To promote a culture of economy, leaders can encourage Soldiers to view spiritual fitness as a valuable aspect of their overall readiness. Soldiers will recognize that investing yields significant dividends in their spiritual fitness.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness in spiritual fitness *centers around a Soldier's Source of Strength and the accessibility of timely support*. Soldiers need to be able to identify and call upon their source during challenging times, ensuring they receive the help necessary to navigate both personal and professional difficulties.


Responsiveness
Fires support in war is paramount to winning. Soldiers need to know that they can call for support at any time and receive it immediately. Spiritually, Soldiers need the same responsiveness from their Source of Strength.
Photo by Angela Turner

Examples of responsive sources of strength include having readily available resources such as spiritual mentors, counseling services, or a deity. This immediate access to assistance reinforces their spiritual strength and empowers them to get through tough moments.

To cultivate responsiveness, leaders should encourage support systems that are easily accessible. Of all the spiritual fitness principles, responsiveness is the most important. It gives Soldiers an option when it seems like all options in a situation are exhausted. Without a responsive source, it's nearly impossible for a Soldier to have spiritual wellness.

Spiritual Fitness Plans

The eight principles of spiritual fitness: simplicity, consistency, flexibility, sustainability, unity of effort, responsiveness, integration, and economy, are essential for fostering a robust spiritual foundation. Each principle provides unique insights that can guide Soldiers in their spiritual development. By understanding and applying these principles, individuals can tailor a plan that will ensure spiritual growth.

A comprehensive spiritual fitness plan incorporates these principles in a way that is meaningful and achievable. A well-structured plan not only facilitates personal growth but also serves as a sharable document to a partner, mentor, or leader in a community of accountability.

While there are many ways to approach a spiritual fitness plan, the next two pages offer an example of a spiritual fitness plan and a blank example Soldiers can use.

Example Spiritual Fitness Plan

Spiritual Practices List the spiritual practices that you commit to doing.	**Briefly describe the plan, how, when, where, who, etc.**	For each Spiritual Fitness Principle, score your plan from 1 to 3: 1: Not aligned with the principle 2: Somewhat aligned with the principle 3: Fully aligned with the principle							
		Simplicity	Consistency	Integration	Flexibility	Unity of Effort	Sustainability	Economy	Responsiveness
Connect with your source of strength.	Climbing a mountain solo each morning to reach the peak and pray.	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	2
Mindfulness and Presence: taking time to be aware of your surroundings, life, and others.	Taking time to be present each day, using short meditation sessions in the morning at home..	3	2	1	3	1	3	1	3
Acts of Service: Engaging in selfless acts fosters connection and reinforces the sense of purpose rooted in your source of strength	Engaging in monthly volunteer activities with a local charity, focusing on community needs.	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
Forgiveness: Letting go of negativity creates space for growth and healing, important for your spiritual journey.	Regularly reflecting on personal grievances and practicing forgiveness through journaling or discussions with a trusted friend each week.	2	1	1	3	1	2	2	2
Community and Relationships: Building and nurturing supportive relationships enhances your spiritual practice through shared experiences and encouragement.	Building supportive connections by meeting weekly with a group of friends for spiritual discussions and encouragement.	3	3	1	3	3	1	2	1
Creativity and Expression: Engaging in creative activities enriches your life and expresses your unique spirit	Engaging in creative activities like painting or writing at least once a week to express spirituality and rejuvenate the spirit.	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	3
Rest and Renewal: Prioritizing self-care and rest is vital to maintain energy and commitment to all other practices.	Prioritizing self-care by scheduling regular time off for rest and reflective practices, such as nature walks or quiet evenings at home.	3	3	2	1	1	3	2	3

High Score (3). A strong alignment with spiritual fitness principles has been demonstrated. Practices show high probability of effectiveness. Continuing to nurture these activities and expanding them further can deepen spiritual engagement and overall well-being.

Moderate Score (2). A solid foundation exists, but there is room for improvement. Revisiting these activities and consid-

ering adjustments may enhance their effectiveness. Having someone provide and outside perspective may be helpful.

Low Score (1). Areas in need of refocused effort should be clear with this score. Low scores suggest a disconnect from the underlying principles. This potentially identifies barriers that will hinder spiritual growth. Seek guidance on how to adjust from a leader who shows strength in these areas.

General Guidance for All Scores

Flexibility is Key: This tool is an example designed for reflection and growth, allowing for modifications to practices and plans based on the score.

Engage with Peers: Discussing findings with peers or mentors can provide additional insights and support during the spiritual journey.

Regular Assessment: Regular reassessment of a spiritual fitness plan is important as life sometimes votes against a Soldier's plan. As life changes, the plan should be evaluated again at no greater than an annual interval.

Conclusion

The scores on this planning tool are an indicator of potential success or failure of a plan. They can give a Soldier a general idea of which principles they are most-aligned with and where they need to focus growth. The goal is for a well-rounded spiritual fitness plan.

The Spiritual Fitness Survey

The Spiritual Fitness Survey (pictured next page) is designed to collect data on a Soldier's spiritual readiness for war and life. This tool provides a structured approach to reflect on and explore various spiritual practices aligned with the eight principles. By engaging in this survey, Leaders and individuals gain valuable insights into their spiritual journey, enabling them to identify strengths, areas for growth, and opportunities for deeper engagement.

The importance of regular and continual evaluation cannot be overstated. Spiritual fitness is an ongoing journey that evolves with life's circumstances, challenges, and personal growth.

Chaplains and religious affairs specialists can help Soldiers understand and evaluate the results. There are also many agencies like Behavioral Health and Military Family Life Counselors who can provide clarity.

Spiritual Fitness Survey

Spiritual Fitness is the condition of a Soldier's spirit towards fighting and winning in war and life.
This tool is for leaders and Soldiers to gain clarity on a Soldier's spiritual fitness condition and to provide resources for improvement

SF Principles:	Simplicity	Consistency	Integration	Flexibility	Unity of Effort	Sustainability	Economy	Responsiveness
Excellent 5 points	I find it effortless to practice my spiritual fitness	I perform spiritual fitness practices many times each day	I incorporate spiritual fitness into every aspect of life	I can practice spiritual fitness in any situation or location	My community gives strong support to my spiritual fitness	I can continue my current spiritual fitness indefinitely	I invest resources regularly in my spiritual fitness	My source of strength is immediately available to me
Good 4 points	Practicing my spiritual fitness is straightforward	I engage in spiritual fitness practices daily	I blend spiritual fitness into many areas of my life	I can practice spiritual fitness in most places with ease	My community gives good support to my spiritual fitness	My spiritual fitness is sustainable for a long time	I occasionally invest resources in my spiritual fitness	My source of strength is quickly available
Average 3 points	I find my spiritual fitness can be burdensome	I practice spiritual fitness weekly	I incorporate spiritual fitness into my routine but not fully	It is hard to adapt my spiritual fitness in challenges	My community gives average support to my spiritual fitness	My spiritual fitness is taxing, I sometimes ignore it	I rarely invest resources into my spiritual fitness	I have a source of strength, but access is irregular
Needs Improvement 2 points	I struggle with spiritual fitness as being achievable	I practice spiritual fitness occasionally, with no routine	I rarely blend spiritual fitness with any other areas of health	I need specific conditions to practice spiritual fitness	My community gives weak support to my spiritual fitness	I struggle with sustaining any level of spiritual fitness	I often forget or don't prioritize spiritual fitness with resources	There are barriers to seek my source of strength
Poor 1 points	Spiritual fitness is difficult to start or understand	I practice spiritual fitness on the rarest of occasions	I struggle to see how spiritual fitness connects to life	There are too many burdens in life to begin spiritual fitness	My community gives no support to my spiritual fitness	My spiritual fitness is rarely sustainable	There are rarely any resources used for my spiritual fitness	I struggle to identify a source of strength in life
Critical 0 points	I can't figure out spiritual fitness, it's too complex	I never practice spiritual fitness knowingly	I don't integrate spiritual fitness at all in life	I can't practice spiritual fitness no matter the circumstances	I have no community to support my spiritual fitness	I neglect spiritual fitness practices completely	My spiritual fitness is not worth my resources	I have no source of strength in life
	Score: _____	Score: _____	Score: _____	Score: _____	Score: _____	Score: _____	Score: _____	Score: _____

Total Score Indicates:

Score: 36-40 (Excellent): Maintain your strong practices and discipline. Avoid becoming complacent.

Score: 28-35 (Good): Maintain your strong practices but look for ways to improve to excellence.

Score: 20-27 (Average): Some areas for improvement are evident, seek a coach or mentor to guide you through spiritual growth.

Score: 12-19 (Caution): Reassess your priorities and take immediate steps to strengthen your spiritual fitness.

Score:5-11 (Poor): Engage in honest reflection and counseling or training to uncover the barriers to your spiritual fitness; actively seek support.

Score: 0-4 (Critical): Take immediate action to address your spiritual fitness; reach out for help from support resources like a Unit Ministry Team, behavioral health services, or other community resources.

Total Score: _____

Spiritually Ready for War and Life

Denigrated Ability to Fight and Win

Key Concepts from Chapter 3

- Eight Principles of Spiritual Fitness: This chapter introduced and defined the eight principles (simplicity, consistency, flexibility, sustainability, unity of effort, responsiveness, integration, economy) that underpin effective spiritual fitness.
- Framework for Spiritual Growth: The eight principles provide a comprehensive framework for personal spiritual development plans.
- Role of Unit Ministry Teams: UMTs play a critical role in training and supporting Soldiers in the practical application of these principles, particularly through training programs described in chapter seven.
- Holistic Integration: This chapter emphasized the importance of integrating spiritual fitness with other dimensions of well-being (physical, mental, sleep, and nutritional).
- Personal Spiritual Fitness Plan: The chapter concluded with an example plan and a spiritual fitness survey.

4

Stages of Spiritual Development

A Chaplain in the 173rd Airborne Brigade surveying a training area to find out where he can best meet the needs of the formation. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Alexander Henninger*

The Stages of Spiritual Development

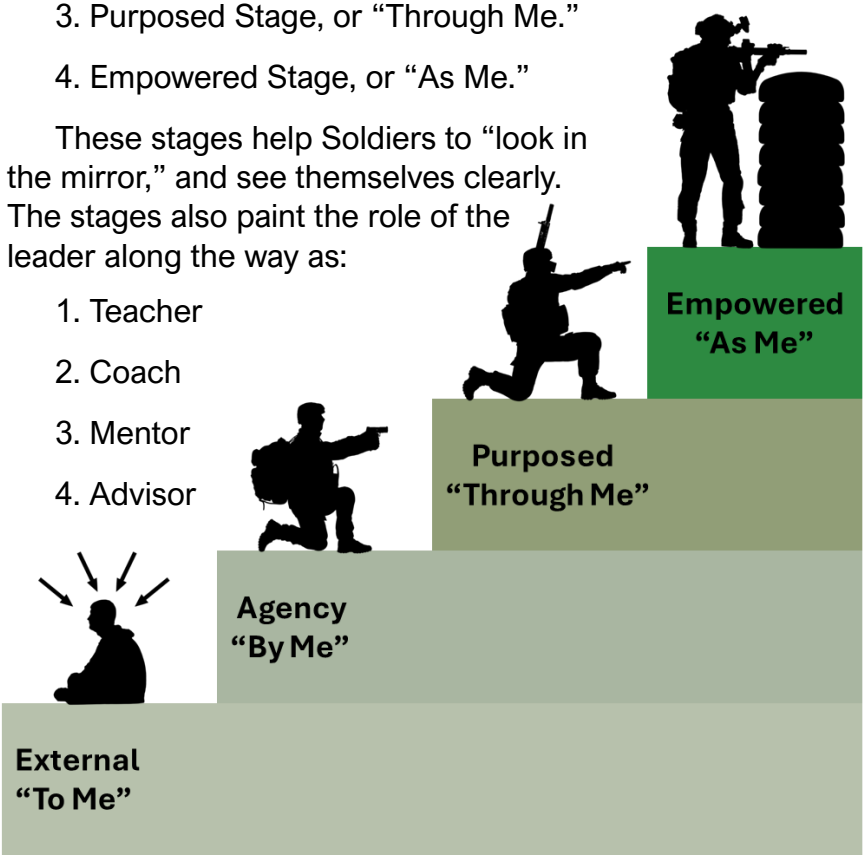
Building upon the previous chapters, there is a foundation of Spiritual Fitness (the What), the definition of the Soldier's Spirit (the Who), and the Spiritual Fitness Principles (the How). This chapter examines the Stages of Spiritual Development, a litmus for the Soldier's journey and the key metric for unit readiness. Each stage represents periods of spiritual growth, marked by key milestones, that show progression over time.

Spiritual development occurs in four stages:

1. External Stage, or "To Me."
2. Agency Stage, or "By Me."
3. Purposed Stage, or "Through Me."
4. Empowered Stage, or "As Me."

These stages help Soldiers to "look in the mirror," and see themselves clearly. The stages also paint the role of the leader along the way as:

1. Teacher
2. Coach
3. Mentor
4. Advisor



Stage I: External, “To Me”

In the "To Me" stage, Soldiers often find themselves grappling with feelings of disempowerment as they perceive life events as external forces acting upon them. This stage is characterized by a sense of being at the mercy of life, leading to an initial struggle in recognizing their power to influence their own lives. This stage is the first in a Soldier’s spiritual journey, where awareness develops.

Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.

-Abraham Lincoln

Possible Indicators

Emotional Distress: Soldier habitually displays feelings of anxiety, frustration, or sadness, often feeling overwhelmed by their circumstances.

Lack of Agency: Soldier believes that external factors dictate their life choices and outcomes, leading to a passive approach to problem-solving.

Isolation: Soldier shows signs of withdrawal from social interactions or support networks, seeming disconnected from peers and leadership.

Resistance to Change: Soldier is reluctant to seek help or engage in activities that promote personal growth, often fearing judgment or stigma.

Limited Self-Reflection: Soldier struggles to articulate their feelings or experiences, leading to challenges in recognizing their spiritual and emotional needs.

Progression Milestones in this Stage:

Milestone 1: Powerless

At the outset of this stage, Soldiers may feel overwhelmed by their environment and circumstances. They might experience a sense of helplessness, believing that they have little agency in their lives. This feeling can manifest in various ways, such as frustration, anxiety, and a diminished sense of purpose, which can hinder their overall well-being.

Milestone 2: Seeking

As Soldiers confront their sense of powerlessness, they may begin to recognize their need for support and guidance. This is the first step toward seeking out resources; whether through friends, family, or professional support systems. It marks a critical turning point where Soldiers start to question their surroundings and seek deeper meaning or understanding, signaling the desire for change.

Milestone 3: Reflecting

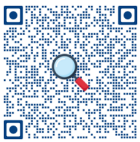
In this milestone, Soldiers begin to engage in introspection, contemplating their experiences and emotions. They may start journaling or participating in discussions with

peers, which encourages deeper self-awareness. This reflective practice often helps them to identify their feelings and thoughts; setting the stage for personal growth and exploration of their spiritual needs.

> **"If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less."**
> -General Eric Shinseki

Leader Role

In the "To Me" stage, leaders embody the role of Teacher. They are essential in providing consistent foundational life knowledge and support to Soldiers. This role requires dedicated patience and persistent engagement. By fostering an environment of open dialogue, leaders can encourage Soldiers to explore their shortcomings without fear of judgment. Teachers provide educational resources about spiritual fitness and reference developmental practitioners like chaplains or religious affairs specialists to help Soldiers understand the importance of their spiritual fitness growth.

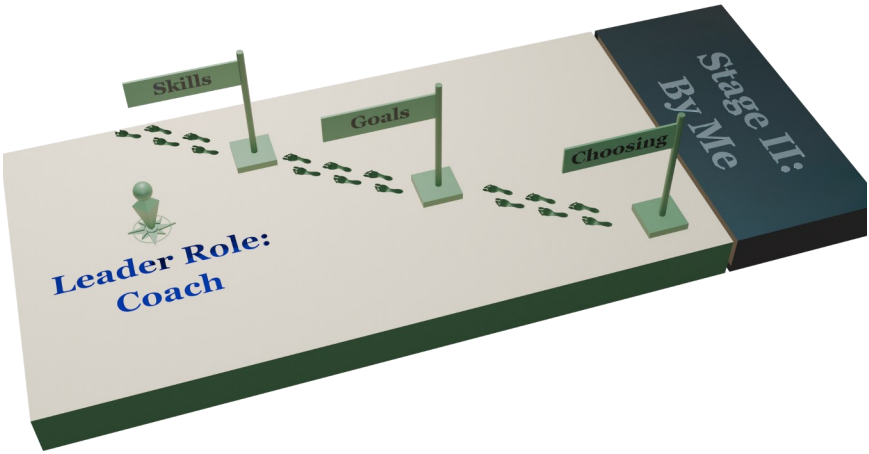


Caution to leaders at all levels:

The External, "To Me," stage is acceptable when Soldiers are new to spiritual fitness or struggling with life events, and some patience is warranted without judgement. However, leaders should know that this stage presents the highest risk for bad decisions, poor leadership, relationship problems, and readiness denigration. Leaders should emphasize helping Soldiers and units progress to Stage II: Agency, where they begin to take responsibility for their life and mission. Unit ministry teams are a primary resource for this advancement. *Note: anyone can exist in any stage—the goal for all Soldiers should be growth.*

Stage II: Agency, “By Me”

In the Agency, or "By Me" stage, Soldiers begin to recognize their capacity to actively shape their life’s experiences. This stage signifies a pivotal shift from feeling powerless to embracing a sense of agency, where Soldiers start taking responsibility for their actions and decisions to see what is in their control. As they navigate this phase, Soldiers develop a stronger belief in their ability to influence their own lives and outcomes, marking a significant step forward in their spiritual journey.



Possible Indicators

Increased Motivation: Soldier shows heightened enthusiasm and drive to pursue personal goals, reflecting a more proactive mindset.

Goal Orientation: Soldier demonstrates a focus on setting and achieving specific life objectives, indicating a commitment to personal growth.

Engagement in Learning: Soldier actively seeks out educational resources or training opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge.

Social Connectivity: Soldier becomes more involved in peer discussions and unit activities, seeking collaboration and support from others.

Reflective Practice: Soldier begins engaging in self-assessment, regularly evaluating their choices and actions in relation to their values.

Progression Milestones

Choosing

In this milestone, Soldiers learn to make conscious decisions that align with their values and goals. This milestone emphasizes the importance of self-determination, allowing Soldiers to take ownership of their circumstances and the consequences that follow. This is often where Soldiers solidify a Source of Strength in their life (see chapter two).

Goals

Soldiers identify specific objectives they wish to pursue, fostering a sense of direction and purpose. They articulate what they want to achieve, which can range from personal development to career aspirations.

Skills

This milestone focuses on the development of personal coping strategies and spiritual fitness techniques. Soldiers may explore various practices, such as stress management and problem-solving, to enhance their capabilities and adapt to challenges. These refined skills foster the momentum needed to propel a Soldier into stage 3.

Leader Role

In the "By Me" stage, leaders adopt the role of Coach. Where a teacher imparts new knowledge, a coach develops knowledge and skills that a Soldier already possesses. Coaches provide ongoing support and encouragement, guiding Soldiers as they develop their skills and pursue their purpose.

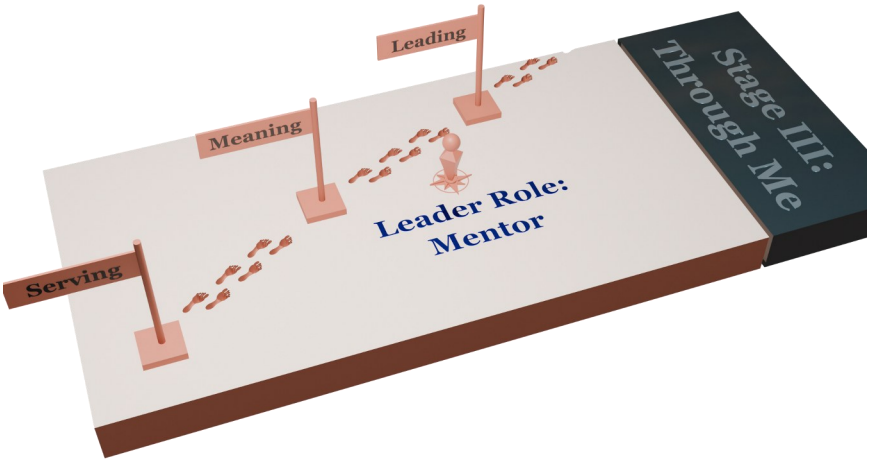
By facilitating development opportunities and fostering a supportive environment, leaders help Soldiers navigate their journey more effectively. This coaching approach includes offering constructive feedback, promoting a growth mindset, and encouraging Soldiers to push the boundaries of growth in their personal and professional lives.

SSG Michael Caldwell from the 93rd Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade, brainstorms with his team during their essay assessment as part of the Best Squad Competition at Fort Carson, Colorado, April 3, 2024.

Photo by SGT Alexander Chatoff

Stage III: Purposed, “Through Me”

In the "Through Me" stage, Soldiers begin to perceive themselves as conduits for greater impact, allowing their values and purpose to guide their actions. This stage signifies a shift toward a deeper understanding of their connection to their spiritual fitness and greater purpose in life. As Soldiers embrace this role, they start to recognize the impact of their actions on their peers and the collective organization.



Possible Indicators

Sense of Purpose: Soldier expresses a clear understanding of their values and how they align with the bigger picture or greater purpose.

Empowerment: Soldier feels an advanced sense of importance towards the unit, actively seeking opportunities to contribute positively to their team and mission.

Inspiration: Soldier inspires others through their actions and decisions, demonstrating leadership qualities even without formal authority.

Collaboration: Soldier engages meaningfully with peers,

fostering a sense of community and support among fellow Soldiers.

Reflection on Impact: Soldier regularly assesses the influence of their actions on others, seeking to create a positive and supportive command climate.

Purposed Soldiers see their role as bigger than themselves, often contributing to team and unit success.

Photo submitted by: MSG Adam Blackwood

Progression Milestones

Serving

In this milestone, Soldiers begin to prioritize service to others, recognizing the importance of supporting their peers, the unit, and community. They actively seek ways to contribute to the well-being of their fellow Soldiers, reinforcing unit cohesion.

Meaning

Soldiers deepen their understanding of the significance of their roles and responsibilities. In this milestone, Soldiers find personal meaning in their actions, fostering a greater connection to the mission and its impact on others.

"Lead by Example"

-General George S. Patton

Leading

Soldiers start to seek formal leadership roles within the unit, influencing their

peers through their example. They recognize the power of their contributions and how they can positively affect morale and professionalism around them.

Leader Role

In the "Through Me" stage, leaders serve as Mentors. A mentor gives value to a mentee through sharing experience, wisdom, and by showing care for the subordinate. The guidance and support encourages Soldiers to embrace their roles as leaders within the unit. Mentors facilitate discussions that promote further self-awareness and encourage Soldiers to explore how their values influence their actions.

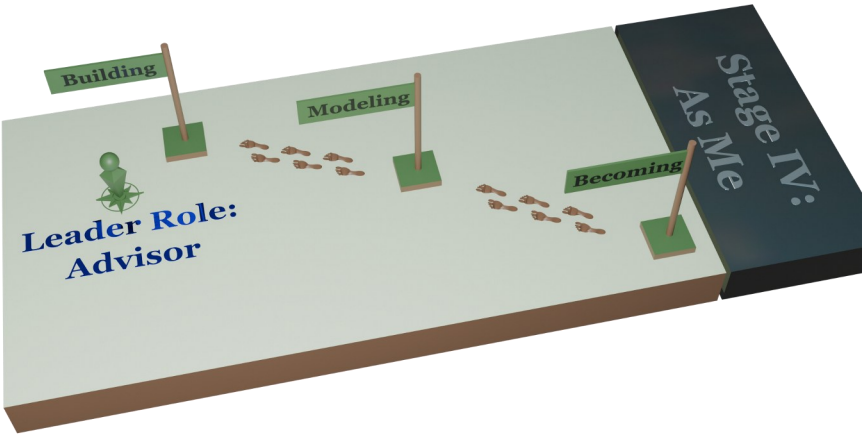
Spc. Hallie Koches, a vocalist with the 99th Readiness Division's 78th Army Band, competes in the Best Warrior Competition March 3-6 at Camp Bullis on Joint Base San Antonio, Texas in 2022. SPC Koches demonstrated that leading by example can mean representing an organization.

Photo by SSG Shawn Morris

Stage IV: Empowered, “As Me”

In the "As Me" stage, a Soldier becomes the pinnacle of spiritual fitness, going deeper into purpose by building a legacy and multiplying their success through organizations and others.

There is still growth available, but in this stage, focus shifts to where concern for the big picture becomes paramount. Soldiers who reach this stage often focus on legacy-building tasks that multiply the strength they have discovered. They continually improve organizations and large groups. General-retired Colin Powell is an excellent example of being empowered (see video QR code above).



Possible Indicators

Authenticity: Soldier expresses a confidence in who they are, embracing their values and beliefs without fear of judgment.

Leadership Presence: Soldier naturally influences others, often being sought out for guidance or support within the unit.

Visionary Thinking: Soldier displays forward-thinking and

strategic insight in mission planning and execution, reflecting a deep understanding of the big picture.

Commitment to Community: Soldier actively contributes to the well-being of the unit and the larger community, embodying the principles of service and collaboration.

Continuous Growth: Soldier demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning and personal development, always seeking to deepen their understanding and impact.

Progression Milestones

Becoming

In this milestone, Soldiers recognize their lifelong transformation and the personal growth they have undergone. They begin to externalize their experiences as goals for a larger collective.

"Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit"
-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Modeling

Soldiers exemplify supreme quality of character, serving as role models within the Army. They actively demonstrate their values through actions and decisions, influencing their peers by living out the principles of spiritual fitness. These Soldiers are often found leading volunteer efforts or developmental sessions without concern for recognition or fanfare.

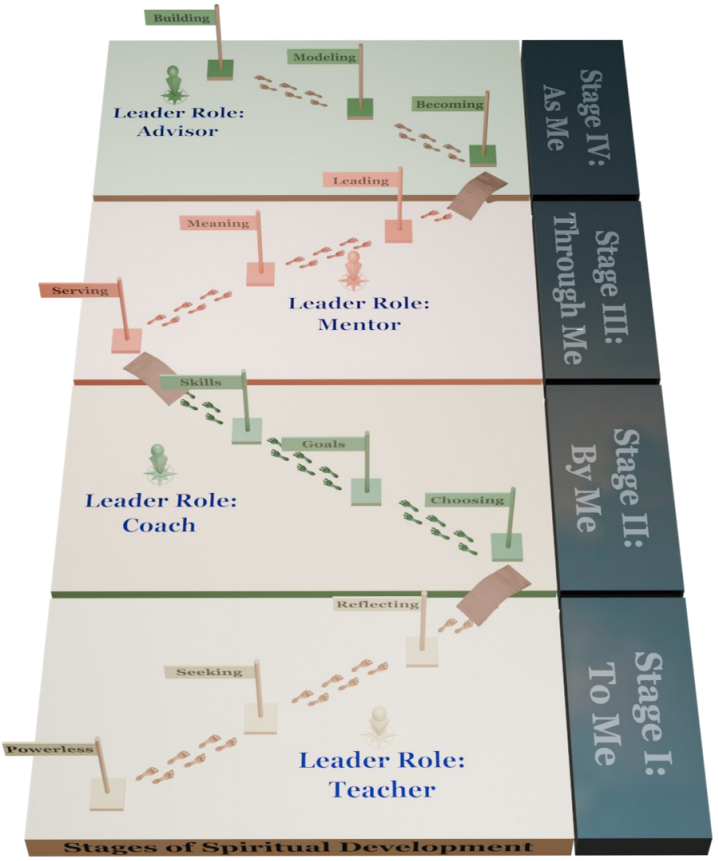
Building

In this final milestone, Soldiers focus on legacy building. They not only cultivate a strong community and foster connections among their peers, but they seek to multiply their best qualities in the lives of others. They work to create an

environment of support and encouragement, empowering others to embark on a journey of spiritual growth.

Leader Role

In the "As Me" stage, leaders take on the role of Advisors. An advisor is a peer in spiritual development. They provide ideas and perspective, supporting Soldiers and working with them to build organizations and teams.



Regression in Spiritual Development

While always progressing forward is a goal for all Soldiers, it's unrealistic. Any number of life's circumstances (marriage, divorce, promotion, deployment, children, etc.) can cause someone in stage three, for example, to suddenly regress to stage one.

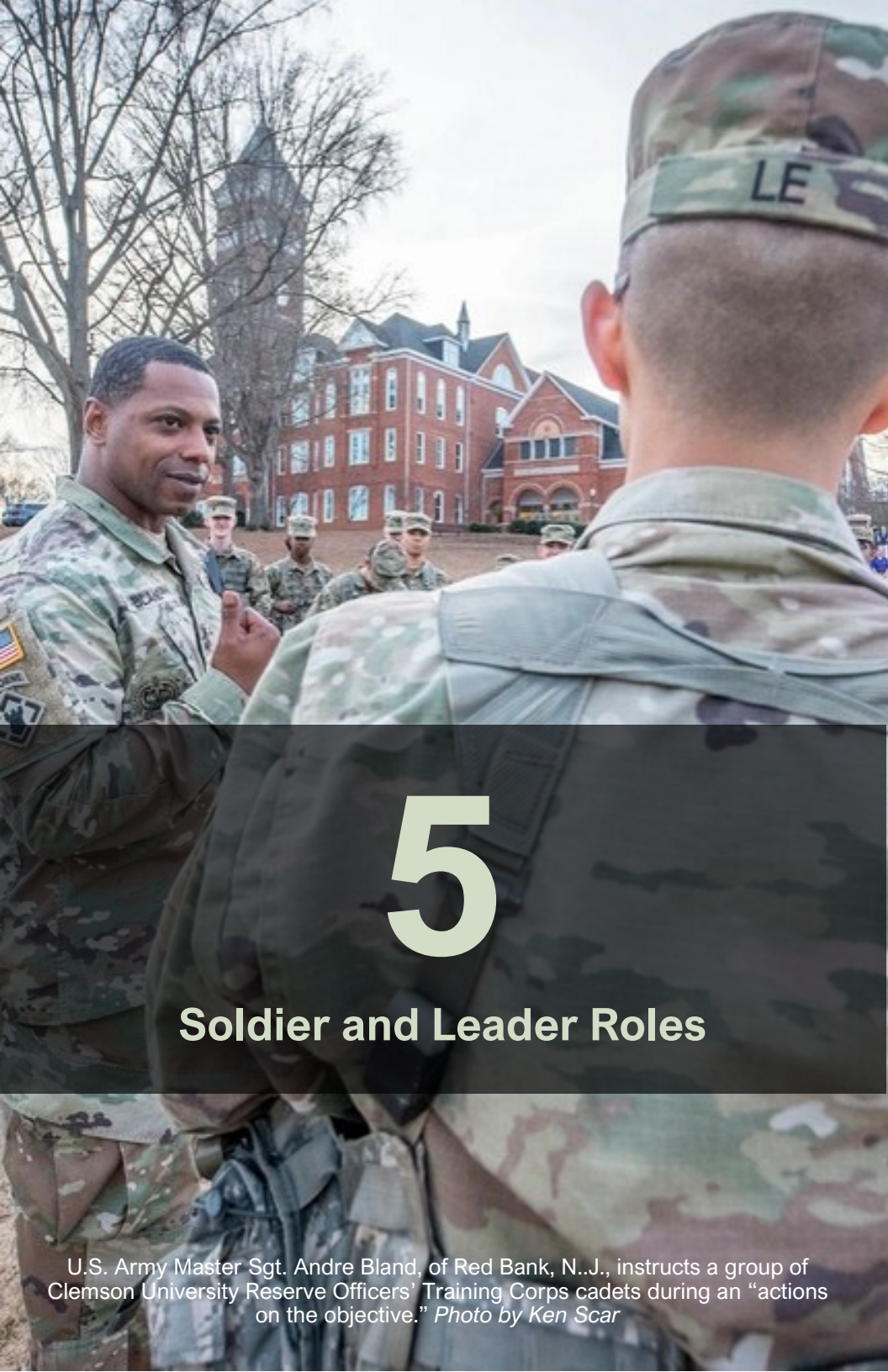
Life has a vote at times. While Soldier's cannot always predict what may knock them backwards, the truths of spiritual development do not change. When a Soldier is knocked backwards, the same steps are required to regain forward momentum: taking responsibility, agency, purpose, and again reaching an empowered balance in life.

No matter when a Soldier is taken backwards, it is a good opportunity to seek help from Army support agencies as those times are often when Soldiers are most vulnerable for undesirable behaviors.

Key Concepts from Chapter 4

The Spiritual Development Stages:

- Stage I: External/To Me: Soldiers initially feel disempowered, viewing life events as external forces impacting them.
- Stage II: Agency/By Me: Soldiers begin to recognize their agency, actively setting goals and taking responsibility for their actions.
- Stage III: Purposed/Through Me: Soldiers connect their values to their service, understanding the impact of their actions on others and their mission.
- Stage IV: Empowered/As Me: Soldiers fully embody their spiritual purpose, demonstrating authenticity and a deep commitment to leadership and community.



5

Soldier and Leader Roles

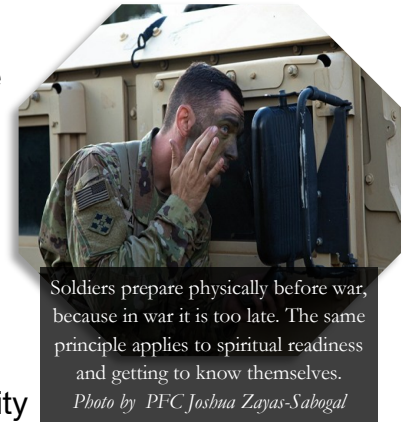
U.S. Army Master Sgt. Andre Bland, of Red Bank, N..J., instructs a group of Clemson University Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets during an "actions on the objective." *Photo by Ken Scar*

Spiritual Fitness: A Shared Responsibility

The strength of the Army rests not just on its weaponry and tactics but on the resilience and well-being of its Soldiers. Spiritual fitness, encompassing the condition of a Soldier's spirit to fight and win in war and life, is paramount to that resilience. This chapter outlines the vital role of Soldiers and leadership at all echelons in nurturing and supporting the spiritual health of their formations.

Individual Soldiers: The Foundation

Self-awareness



Soldiers prepare physically before war, because in war it is too late. The same principle applies to spiritual readiness and getting to know themselves. *Photo by PFC Joshua Zayas-Sabogal*

Soldiers must understand their spiritual needs and Source of Strength *(see chapter three)*. This involves identifying what provides them with meaning, purpose, and resilience. For example, a Soldier might discover that spending time in nature, practicing mindfulness, or connecting with their faith community provides them with purpose. Without this source, Soldiers may struggle to cope with stress and adversity, as they likely lack a true understanding of their life's meaning or value.

Proactive communication

Soldiers must communicate their spiritual needs to leaders. This means openly sharing with supervisors, chaplains, or counselors, without fear of judgment or reprisal. For example, if a Soldier is struggling with stress or moral injury, their support network needs to know to provide appropriate care. Failure to communicate these needs can lead to isolation, escalation of problems, and a negative impact on unit cohesion and mission success.

Self-care practices

Soldiers should implement self-care routines. These are essential for maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual health, especially in high-stress environments. For example, a Soldier might incorporate mindfulness meditation, regular exercise, or spending time with loved ones into their daily routine. Neglecting self-care in any holistic domain can lead to burnout, decreased spiritual, physical, and mental health, and diminished combat effectiveness.

Seeking help

Soldiers should utilize available spiritual fitness resources. The Army provides many resources to support Soldiers' well-being, including unit leader funds, chaplains, mental health professionals, and agencies like Army Community Service. Ignoring available resources can lead to prolonged suffering and potential exacerbation of existing problems.

Adaptability

Soldiers must adapt their spiritual practices to operational demands, while not sacrificing sincerity or devotion. Spiritual practices must be adaptable to changing circumstances, especially in combat environments where time and resources may be limited. For example, an hour-long meditation practice might be better as shorter moments of mindfulness throughout the day in a war zone.

There are times in the military where spiritual health will be faced with crucibles and Soldiers must weather that reality until they can recharge.

Soldier Individual Checklist

- ☐ Source of Strength
- ☐ End-State/Goals Set
- ☐ Spiritual Fitness Plan
- ☐ Engaged with Leaders
- ☐ Supportive Network
- ☐ Adaptable Spiritual Practices

Team Leaders: the First Line of Support

Team Leaders are the first line of support against burnout and spiritual distress within their teams. A team or section leader's ability to build trust and camaraderie is crucial for creating an environment where Soldiers feel safe to share their vulnerabilities and seek support. Leading by example and demonstrating spiritual health sets the tone for the entire team, particularly in high-stress combat environments; it's not a good idea, it's required for Army winning.

Team leaders in the Army represent the first level of supervisory leadership and are the crux of commander priorities and Soldier execution—especially with regards to Army spiritual health.
Photo by SGT Ethan Scofield

Building trust and camaraderie

Team Leaders must foster a team environment that prioritizes trust and mutual respect. This involves talking with team members on a personal level about spiritual fitness, sharing experiences, and ensuring support. For example, a team leader might organize team discussions, training, or spiritual fitness activities with the help of the UMT.

Observational skills

Team leaders must be adept at recognizing signs of stress, burnout, or spiritual struggles in team members. This requires knowing their subordinates and being attentive to changes in behavior, mood, or performance. For example, a team leader might notice a Soldier becoming withdrawn, irritable, or exhibiting decreased performance. Failure to intervene with these signs can result in more serious individual and unit consequences.

Leading by example

Team leaders must demonstrate personal commitment to spiritual well-being and resilience. This involves actively practicing self-care and showing vulnerability when appropriate. For example, a team leader might share their own strategies for managing stress or coping with difficult situations. A leader's actions often speak louder than their words; leading by example is a powerful demonstration of spiritual health.

Combat-specific adaptations

Team leaders must adapt their approach to supporting spiritual fitness based on operational needs. This might involve adjusting communication strategies, finding creative ways to foster team cohesion, and adjusting the frequency and types of check-ins.

Team Leader Checklist

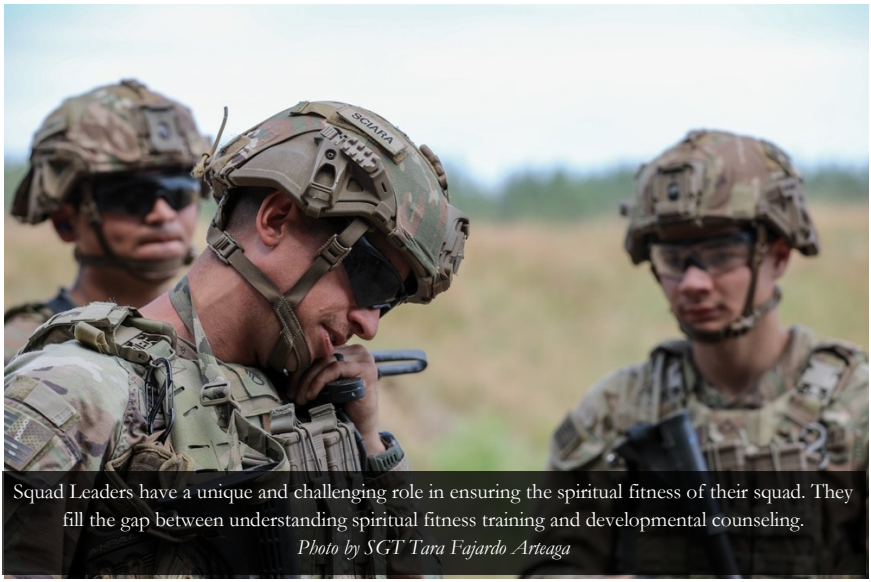
- ☐ My Soldiers have a Source of Strength
- ☐ I've validated Spiritual Fitness Plans
- ☐ Open Communication with Team Members
- ☐ Team Spiritual Fitness Training & Activities
- ☐ Leading from the Front with Spiritual Health
- ☐ Adaptable Approach for Combat

Squad Leader: Fostering a Culture of Support

Squad Leaders are at the forefront of building strong, resilient teams. Their ability to influence a culture of mutual respect and support toward spiritual fitness is critical in ensuring that Soldiers feel comfortable sharing vulnerabilities and seeking help when needed. In high-stress operational environments, the Squad Leader's proactive approach to identifying and addressing spiritual needs is paramount for maintaining team cohesion and combat effectiveness.

Regular check-ins

Squad Leaders should conduct frequent, informal check-ins with team leaders to monitor morale and well-being, including the team leader's spiritual health. This involves going beyond mission readiness assessments to gain a knowledge of individual Soldiers. For example, a Squad Leader might ask Soldiers about their personal lives, changes in behavior, or Soldiers' sources of strength. A lack of proactive check-ins can lead to a failure to recognize and address challenges in a timely manner.



Squad Leaders have a unique and challenging role in ensuring the spiritual fitness of their squad. They fill the gap between understanding spiritual fitness training and developmental counseling.
Photo by SGT Tara Fajardo Arteaga

Peer support

Squad Leaders should facilitate spiritual support networks within the squad. This involves empowering team members to know and support one another, fostering a sense of camaraderie and trust. For example, a Squad Leader might pair more experienced Soldiers with newer Soldiers to provide mentorship and guidance on practicing resilience in difficult times.

The Nation's success rests on the shoulders of the Army, and the Army relies on its smallest elements to be ready to fight and win.
Photo by SGT Tara Fajardo Arteaga

Promoting Mission-Oriented Spiritual Fitness

Squad Leaders foster an environment where spiritual fitness enhances mission accomplishment. For example, a Squad Leader might use a challenging scenario during training to facilitate a discussion on ethical decision-making in combat, or spiritual resilience after a firefight. Failure to connect spiritual fitness with mission accomplishment can lead to decreased unit cohesion, lower morale, and potentially reduced mission effectiveness.

Squad Leader Checklist

- ☐ Inspecting Team Leaders
- ☐ Inform Platoon leadership of Spiritual Health
- ☐ Ensure Resource Awareness
- ☐ Squad Spiritual Fitness Training & Activities
- ☐ Leading by Example with Spiritual Health
- ☐ Combat Resources Plan

Platoon Sergeant/Leader: Resources & Support

Platoon Sergeants and Platoon Leaders (PSG/PL) serve as a crucial link between squads and the broader support systems available within the Army. This pivotal role involves coordinating access to resources, advocating for the integration of spiritual fitness principles into unit training, and fostering a platoon environment that values and supports spiritual well-being.

Resource coordination

Photo by LTC John Hall

PSG/PL must coordinate and facilitate access to resources for Soldiers needing spiritual guidance or support. This includes chaplains, religious affairs specialists, mental health professionals, and relevant community organizations. For example, a Platoon Sergeant might connect a Soldier struggling with grief to a chaplain or grief counseling service. Or the PSG/PL could assist a Soldier in accessing Army Community Service (ACS). Failure to effectively coordinate resources can lead to delays in addressing urgent needs, negatively impacting Soldier well-being and unit readiness.

Training integration

PSG/PL should advocate for the integration of the eight spiritual fitness principles and practices into platoon-level training. For example, a Platoon Sergeant might incorporate brief mindfulness exercises into daily PT sessions or integrate discussions of Army Values into team-building activities. This pro-active approach emphasizes the value of spir-

itual fitness in strengthening both individual and platoon resilience.

Fostering a supportive platoon environment

Platoon Sergeants/Leaders must foster a platoon environment that is supportive, inclusive, and respectful of diverse spiritual beliefs and practices. This involves creating a climate of open communication, mutual respect, and trust. For example, a Platoon Sergeant might facilitate open discussions about stress management techniques or organize team-building activities designed to foster camaraderie and bonding.

Squad and Team Representation

PSG/PL effectively represent the spiritual fitness needs and concerns of their squads and teams to higher command. This includes providing regular updates on the effectiveness of spiritual fitness plans and training, advocating for additional resources or training as needed, and escalating significant concerns to appropriate channels. Platoon Sergeants/Leaders have systems in place to gather information from their squads, ensuring that the needs of all Soldiers are represented accurately and effectively to higher command. Failure to effectively represent their teams to command can result in serious unit denigration.

Platoon Sergeant & Leader Checklist

- ☐ Resource Allocation & Coordination
- ☐ Spiritual Fitness Training Integration in Unit
- ☐ Acknowledging Best Spiritual Fitness Practices
- ☐ Shaping Platoon Culture for Spiritual Health
- ☐ Leading by Example with Spiritual Health
- ☐ Combat Resources Plan

Company Command Teams: Setting the Climate and Providing Resources

First Sergeants and Company Commanders set the overall tone and culture regarding spiritual fitness within their companies. Their actions, policies, resource allocation and *mostly their example* directly influence the environment their Soldiers inhabit. Effective leadership in this area fosters a climate of support and resilience, while a failure to prioritize spiritual well-being can have significant negative consequences on unit cohesion, morale, and mission effectiveness, especially during challenging operations.

Policy implementation

Company Commanders and First Sergeants develop and implement company-level policies and practices that demonstrably support spiritual fitness initiatives. This includes ensuring that unadulterated time is allocated for personal spiritual fitness practices, and that unit events and activities incorporate elements that foster spiritual well-being. For example, a First Sergeant might advocate for a Soldier

with religious practices to have space on Sundays, or establishing designated spaces during a deployment for prayer or meditation in the unit. Failure to establish clear policies and procedures can leave Soldiers without critical support.

Resource allocation

Command teams allocate resources (time, personnel, budget, etc.) to support spiritual fitness initiatives within the company. This involves ensuring that chaplains, UMTs, and other support personnel have the necessary resources to fulfill their roles effectively. For example, a Company Commander might secure funding for a unit retreat focused on spiritual fitness or ensure funding is available for spiritual fitness literature and training. Inadequate resource allocation limits the effectiveness of spiritual fitness support and undermines a unit's spiritual health.

Collaboration with support systems

Command Teams build strong collaborative partnerships with chaplains, UMTs, mental health professionals, and community organizations to address Soldiers' diverse spiritual needs. This includes establishing clear communication channels and mechanisms for referrals. For example, a First Sergeant might schedule regular meetings with the unit chaplain to discuss the spiritual needs of the Soldiers and coordinate support efforts. *The command team is the gate to the unit; if they are not a conduit of Army agencies, then they are a barrier to reaching them.*

Combat-specific adaptations

First Sergeants and Company Commanders adapt their approach to spiritual fitness support based on operational demands and combat stressors. This includes ensuring that resources and support remain accessible even in austere or high-tempo environments. For example, a First Sergeant

might establish a system for regularly checking in with Soldiers deployed to combat zones, ensuring they have access to chaplains, mental health support, and communication with family. Failure to adapt, even in combat conditions, puts Soldiers at a greater risk for spiritual distress and negatively impacts the entire unit's will to fight.

Commander & First Sergeant Checklist

- ☐ Resource Allocation & Coordination
- ☐ Spiritual Fitness Training Policies
- ☐ Liaison with Support Agencies
- ☐ Spiritual Fitness Climate and Culture
- ☐ Leading by Example with Spiritual Health
- ☐ Combat Resources Plan

Key Concepts from Chapter 5

- Shared Responsibility: Spiritual fitness support is a shared responsibility between individuals and across all echelons.
- Echelon-Specific Actions: Each leadership level has specific actions to foster spiritual fitness.
- Supportive Environment: Leaders must foster open communication and mutual respect.
- Combat Adaptability: Spiritual fitness support systems must adapt to operational demands.
- Mission Readiness: Spiritual fitness is integral to mission success and unit cohesion.

6

Unit Ministry Teams

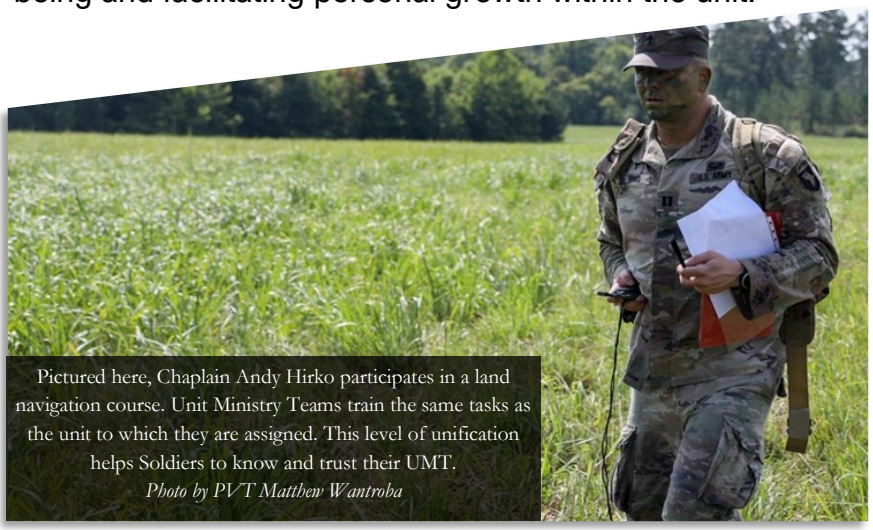
Unit Ministry Teams

The U.S. Army's strength is not defined by its technological advancements and tactical expertise; it fundamentally rests on the resilience and well-being of its Soldiers. Previous chapters have laid groundwork with the “who” (the Soldier's spirit), exploring the “what” (spiritual fitness principles), and the “how” (stages of spiritual development). Leader responsibilities (individual and leadership roles in fostering spiritual fitness) were also highlighted. This chapter focuses on the Army’s primary support mechanism for spiritual fitness: Unit Ministry Teams (UMT).

UMTs are uniquely positioned in every Army battalion; during any Army operational context. They have an indispensable role in nurturing and supporting the spiritual health of Soldiers within the Army's comprehensive approach to holistic well-being. UMTs are not merely providers of religious services; they are vital partners who ensure the spiritual fitness of all Soldiers, regardless of their beliefs.

Nurture the Living

The UMT has a proactive role in cultivating spiritual well-being and facilitating personal growth within the unit.



Pictured here, Chaplain Andy Hirko participates in a land navigation course. Unit Ministry Teams train the same tasks as the unit to which they are assigned. This level of unification helps Soldiers to know and trust their UMT.
Photo by PVT Matthew Wantroba

Confidential Counseling and Support

Foundational to UMT's work is the principle of strict confidentiality. UMTs provide confidential counseling and pastoral care to Soldiers for spiritual growth, perspective, and for those struggling with the emotional and spiritual aftermath of traumatic experiences, moral injury, or grief. This confidentiality, when a matter of spiritual or religious conviction, ensures a safe and non-judgmental space for Soldiers, protected by law, to process their feelings, explore their spiritual needs, and seek guidance without fear of reprisal or judgment.

Unit Ministry Teams have a robust ability to keep conversations strictly confidential, bound by the constitution and U.S. Law. This allows Soldiers to freely talk and express things that they need help with without fear of the conversation ever being shared.

Pfc. Lynnwood Thomas

The trust strict confidentiality gives UMTs a paramount tool for effective support and healing. The UMT adheres to strict ethical guidelines and Army regulations regarding confidentiality (AR 165-1), protecting the privacy of Soldiers at all times.

Face-to-Face Spiritual Fitness Support

UMTs are present in units to engage in regular and in-

formal check-ins with Soldiers, fostering communication about their spiritual needs and concerns. This might involve individual meetings, group discussions, or simply being present for the Army. This proactive approach allows for early identification and addressal of potential challenges before they escalate.

Building Strong and Ready Teams (BSRT) Integration

UMTs actively manage the Building Strong and Ready Teams (BSRT) program, integrating spiritual fitness principles into team-building activities, resilience, and religious and life-skill support training. This ensures a holistic approach to Soldier development, recognizing that spiritual

Unit Ministry Teams heavily invest in Building Strong and Ready Teams, a flagship course offered to the Army to ensure the spiritual health and fitness of Soldiers, Families, and teams.
Photo by SGT Benjamin Kullman

well-being is intrinsically linked to every aspect of life.

Spiritual Fitness Training (see Chapter seven)

UMTs are responsible for administering the Army's spiritual fitness training program, a comprehensive catalogue of training courses grounded in this guide, FM 7-22, and other relevant doctrine. The training is designed to educate Sol-

diers and equip leaders and individuals to assess spiritual fitness and progress. The program emphasizes a practical application of the eight spiritual fitness principles (*Chapter 3*) that Soldiers may progress through the stages of spiritual development (*Chapter 4*).

Community Engagement

UMTs go beyond the confines of the unit and Army, connecting Soldiers with community resources and opportunities that foster spiritual growth and purpose. This might involve connecting Soldiers with local faith-based organizations, volunteer groups, or other community support networks. Example: The UMT may organize a volunteer event at a local homeless shelter, allowing Soldiers to connect with their community and gain spiritual strength through serving others.

Chaplain Munson providing mass in Iraq in 2012. *Photo by SGT Coltin Helle*

Religious Programs

Approximately 82% of the military are religious adherents. UMTs help to perform or provide religious services for that vast majority of Soldiers through on-base chapel programs and community engagements. UMTs also have the distinct role of providing religious support in combat and coordinating with local religious leaders to gauge communities.

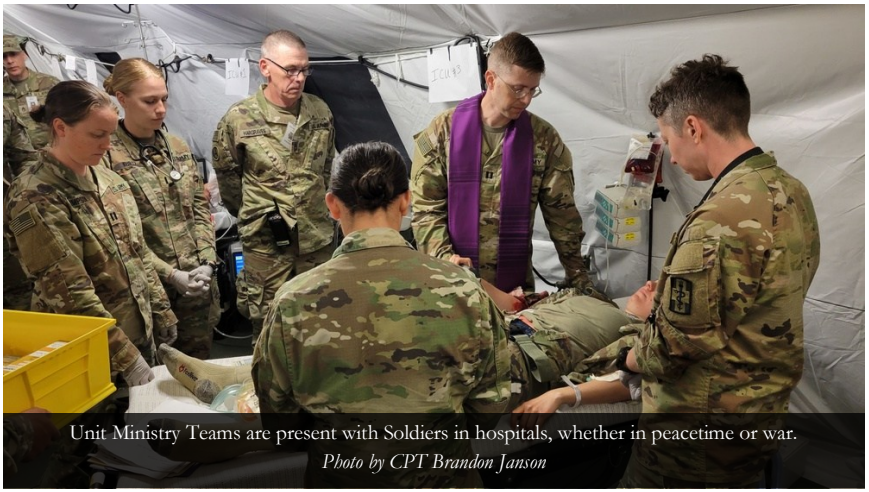
Unit-Level Spiritual Fitness Programs

Chaplains and religious affairs specialists host other training events that focus on spiritual fitness. For example, the UMT may organize a spiritual fitness run that blends rigorous physical training with the spiritual fitness principles.

UMTs also focus on unit and section tailored training. While a Chaplain is endorsed by a religious body, they still have the ability to support Soldiers from any faith, or no faith, through spiritual fitness events. Religious affairs specialists have no religious requirement, uniquely positioning them to deliver spiritual fitness training without the stigma that some Soldiers perceive towards a religious leader.

Care for the Wounded

UMTs play a crucial role in providing support and care to Soldiers experiencing spiritual trauma, moral injury, or other significant challenges to their well-being.



Unit Ministry Teams are present with Soldiers in hospitals, whether in peacetime or war.
Photo by CPT Brandon Janson

Hospital Ministry

UMTs extend their vital ministry beyond the confines of the military unit or garrison, providing crucial spiritual and emotional support to Soldiers hospitalized for injuries or illnesses. Hospital ministry, a significant aspect of a UMT's outreach, involves being assigned to, or visiting Soldiers in, medical facilities to offer pastoral care, prayer, and a compassionate presence. UMTs efforts also extend to family members and loved ones.

Unit chaplains and religious affairs specialists collaborate with hospital chaplains and medical staff to ensure holistic care, respecting individual beliefs and preferences.

This ministry acknowledges the unique challenges of recovery in a clinical setting, creating a sense of connection and spiritual solace that can significantly aid the healing process, both physically and emotionally. The UMT's presence offers hope, promotes healing, and strengthens spiritual fitness.

Specialized Programs and Referrals

UMTs are trained to identify and address signs of spiritual trauma and moral injury, referring Soldiers to specialized services (specialized chaplains, behavioral health professionals, etc.) as needed. They work closely with other support systems within the Army to ensure Soldiers receive comprehensive, targeted care.

Honor the Fallen

UMTs support the spiritual fitness of Soldiers, Families, and units during times of loss and grief.

Grief Counseling and Support

Chaplains provide essential grief counseling and support to Soldiers, families, and units following the death of a Soldier or Family member. They offer comfort, guidance, Army resources, and are sensitive to the unique needs and perspectives of each individual and Family.

Memorial Ceremonies and Services.

UMTs play a vital role in planning and conducting respectful memorial services that honor the fallen Soldier's life and service. These services focus on the spiritual fitness of those left behind. UMTs help create meaningful opportunities for remembrance and healing, fostering a sense of

community and shared grief among those impacted by the loss. Then, when fallen Soldiers have been properly honored, UMTs help the unit get back to higher levels of spiritual readiness.

Conclusion

Unit Ministry Teams are not merely providers of religious services; they are indispensable partners in the Army's holistic approach to spiritual fitness. Their proactive spiritual care, compassionate support during times of crisis, and honoring of the fallen are essential elements in fostering spiritually healthy units.

Key Concepts from Chapter 6

- UMTs provide the Army with spiritual fitness training, a capability of both the chaplain and religious affairs specialist.
- UMTs provide holistic spiritual support: Their role extends beyond religious services to include confidential counseling, facilitating spiritual growth, advocating for spiritually healthy environments, and collaborating with other support systems to address all aspects of Soldier well-being.
- UMTs are essential for resilience: They provide crucial support to Soldiers facing spiritual trauma, moral injury, grief, and other challenges, fostering resilience and aiding recovery.
- UMTs adapt to the diverse needs of units and dynamic environments where Soldiers serve.

7

Army Spiritual Fitness Training

SGM Jody Courts training a group of guardsman and reservists.
Photo by John Hughel

Army Spiritual Fitness Training

"Purpose Leads, Strength Follows"

Spiritual fitness training is crucial in the Army's approach to holistic Soldier well-being. The program is led by Unit Ministry Teams with religious affairs specialists serving as primary trainers for company, platoon, and squad level elements and organizations. The training course is designed to build spiritual fitness awareness and resilience through training packages that cover: Understanding the Spiritual Domain, the Eight Spiritual Fitness Principles, the Four Stages of Spiritual Development, and Leading Spiritually Fit Formations. Unit leaders can contact their unit ministry team to schedule training.

1. Understanding the Soldier's Spirit

(Reference Chapter Two of this Guide)

This foundational topic takes participants through self-discovery and leader awareness, exploring the very essence of a Soldier's spirit. It defines the core components—Consciousness, Creativity, and Connection—and reveals the power of a Soldier's Source of Strength.

While best done as a unit or organization, Fit-Spirit training is also applicable for individual Soldier development.
Photo by CPT Valerie Palacios

Outcomes:

Soldiers walk away with an understanding of the spiritual dimension, themselves, and how their spiritual fitness is directly related to mis-

sion success in the Army.

2. Spiritual Fitness Principles

(Reference Chapter Three of this Guide)

This topic introduces the Eight Spiritual Fitness Principles: Simplicity, Consistency, Flexibility, Sustainability, Unity of Effort, Responsiveness, Integration, and Economy. These principles serve as the guardrails of a robust fitness plan. The principles also equip leaders through the Army Spiritual Fitness Assessment (page 50) to gauge individual and unit readiness.

Outcomes:

Soldiers are equipped during this training with the tools needed to build a strong spiritual fitness plan, to gauge the likelihood it will succeed, and a tangible assessment.

3. Stages of Spiritual Development

(Reference Chapter Four of this Guide)

This topic teaches about the journey of spiritual growth through four distinct stages:

The External Stage, "To Me."

The Agency Stage, "By Me."

The Purposed Stage, "Through Me"

The Empowered Stage, "As Me."

These stages offer a roadmap for personal growth, highlighting key milestones and the leadership roles required

during each phase.

Outcomes:

For Soldiers, this training provides an enhanced self-awareness and honest "look in the mirror." For units, leaders learn about how to effectively lead Soldiers in each stage as Teachers, Coaches, Mentors, or Advisors.

4. Leading Spiritually Fit Formations

(Reference Chapter Five of this Guide)

This topic teaches leaders at echelon about spiritual fitness through the lens of leadership. The training provides an executive overview of the material in chapters 2-4 and covers the specific leader requirements found in chapter 5.

This training package is suited for units and leaders that need a constrained overview of spiritual fitness training and unit integration.

Outcomes:

Leaders will understand, broadly, the concepts of Army spiritual fitness, and their direct roles as leaders in the assessment and development of their subordinates.

Training for Units and Organizations

Unit and organizational leaders who desire to take advantage of Army Spiritual Fitness Training should contact their Unit Ministry Team. If the organization does not have a dedicated UMT, then they should schedule through their closest garrison religious support office.

U.S. Army Paratroopers assigned to the 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), prepare to complete the proper landing procedures to prevent the risk of injuries during an Airborne jump
Photo by Christopher Hall

8

Glossary

Glossary

The following are terms introduced throughout this guide:

Term	Definition	Page
Art	A component of creativity that represents the expression of personal and collective experiences through various mediums, enabling Soldiers to communicate their thoughts, emotions, and insights.	29
Accountability	The muscle of Spiritual Fitness, reflecting the communities to which a Soldier shows allegiance and answers to.	33
Advisor	A leader who gives wise council and recommendations to a Soldier as a team member.	67
Agency Stage	Also known as the "By Me" stage, it is the second level of Soldier spiritual development that revolves around self, but demonstrates the ability to make decisions, take responsibility and set goals.	59
Be	To exist; in the context of this guide it represents the existence of a Soldier.	10
Beliefs	A profound substance of consciousness that shapes the perceptions and actions of Soldiers. They are not merely ideas; they embody ideals—deeply held principles that inform how individuals navigate their lives and make decisions.	18
Coach	A leader who develops skills, talent, and knowledge that a Soldier already has to help them grow.	61
Community	A vital component of a Soldier's spirit within the connection component, serving as the backbone for support, camaraderie, and shared purpose with others.	32

Term	Definition	Page
Connection	A major component of the Soldier's spirit that encompasses both internal attributes and the bridges formed between the Soldier and those around them; it is the critical link from the Soldier to life.	30
Consciousness	A major component of the Soldier's spirit that is described as the state of being aware of and able to evaluate one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings.	17
Consistency	In spiritual fitness, it is the principle that is about engaging regularly in intentional practices that nurture spiritual growth.	41
Creativity	A major component of the Soldier's spirit that gives the ability to generate novel ideas, approaches, and solutions that reflect individual expression and innovative thinking.	24
Economy	In spiritual fitness, it is the principle that emphasizes the importance of a Soldier investing in their spiritual health.	47
Emotional Bonds	The deep connections formed through shared experiences, characterized by the dynamic nature of relationships that link creativity and connection.	36
Emotional Intelligence	The ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as understand the emotions of others, existing as the link between consciousness and connection.	36

Term	Definition	Page
Emotional Expression	The process of conveying feelings through verbal and non-verbal communication, serving as a crucial link between consciousness and creativity.	35
Empowered Stage	Also known as the "As Me" stage, it is the highest level of Soldier spiritual development where a Soldier becomes the best version of themselves and exists to model spiritual strength to others and build a legacy through organizations and others.	65
End State	The conditions and circumstances that define victory.	10
Ethics	The application of moral principles that guide Soldiers in their decision-making processes.	27
External Stage	Also known as the "To Me" stage, it is the infancy of Soldier spiritual development where a Soldier believes they are powerless and a victim to life's circumstances.	56
Flexibility	In spiritual fitness, it is the principle that emphasizes the importance of having diverse spiritual practices that can adapt to various situations.	42
Growth	The tangible evidence that a Soldier's spiritual fitness is effective	34

Term	Definition	Page
Identity	Is a person's understanding of who they are at their core and how they wish to be perceived by others.	20
Imagination	The base element of creativity, serving as a limitless system where ideas are born and possibilities are explored.	25
Innovation	The process of transforming unique ideas into practical solutions that effectively address challenges or enhance outcomes.	24
Integration	In spiritual fitness, it is the principle that involves embedding spiritual wellness into a comprehensive framework alongside physical, mental, sleep, and nutritional health.	46
Intuition	A profound sense of direction that arises from both cognitive abilities and spiritual attunement, enabling Soldiers to subconsciously collect and process information in their environment.	22
Mentor	A leader who shares life experience and perspective with a Soldier.	64
Mindfulness	The connection to other people or things through focus, empathy, and understanding to achieve peace of mind	32

Term	Definition	Page
Playfulness	A component of creativity which embodies the spirit of exploration and joy in overcoming challenges.	27
Purpose	A fundamental element of consciousness that provides Soldiers with direction and motivation in both their personal and professional lives.	17
Purposed Stage	Also known as the "Through Me" stage, it is the third level of Soldier spiritual development where a Soldier begins to discover deeper purpose and meaning in life, primarily through helping others.	62
Response	The Soldier's response or applied behavior towards a stimulus.	14
Responsiveness	In spiritual fitness, it is the principle that centers around a Soldier's Source of Strength and the accessibility of timely support.	45
Science	An aspect of a Soldier's consciousness that encompasses the psychological characteristics, profiles, and dispositions that define their behavior and performance.	22
Simplicity	In spiritual fitness, it is the principle that ensures practices are uncomplicated and effortlessly integrated into daily routines.	40

Term	Definition	Page
Soldier's Spirit	Represented by the core substance of a compass in this guide, it is the non-physical identity and the essence through which a Soldier's life is guided.	16
Source of Strength	The internal, driving purpose that empowers each Soldier, anchoring them amidst the challenges of life.	15
Spiritual Fitness	The condition of a Soldier’s spirit toward readiness to fight and win in war and life.	7
Stimulus	External Influences and events that influence Soldier decisions.	14
Sustainability	In spiritual fitness, it is the principle that involves viewing spiritual readiness as an enduring investment in Soldier well-being, not a seasonal diet.	43
Teacher	A leader who imparts new knowledge to a Soldier.	58
Unity of Effort	In spiritual fitness, it is the principle that highlights the necessity of community and accountability in achieving spiritual goals.	44
Values	The principles and standards that guide actions and decisions, embodying the importance, worth, and usefulness assigned to various aspects of life.	31

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9

References, Research, & Development

A military working dog trains in obedience while exercising.
Photo by Jason Johnston

Spiritual Fitness Guide

References, Research, & Development

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Methodology

The development team employed a comprehensive and rigorous evidence-based approach. This approach ensured the integration of well-substantiated concepts from diverse areas of science, spirituality, religion, and human studies. The development team also leveraged their decades of extensive experience in the Army Chaplain Corps, higher education, and broader military experience in every Army echelon.

Drawing upon a variety of peer-reviewed articles, meta-analyses, and empirical studies, the team utilized a layered referencing strategy to triangulate findings and support both existing and novel ideas presented herein. All materials included in this guide are developed to the extent that the intellectual content, unless otherwise indicated, belongs to the United States Army.

It is important to note that the multimedia content provided through QR codes, callouts, or separate text boxes is not the property of the U.S. Army and is not endorsed by them.

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89th Military Police Brigade Soldier during a Spiritual Fitness Event in Belton, Texas.
Photo by: Sgt. Alexander Chatoff

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